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MISSOURI YESTERDAYS

LOUISE FLATT HAUCK

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Stories of the Romantic Days of Missouri

By

LOUISE PLATT HAUCK

Kansas City, Missouri
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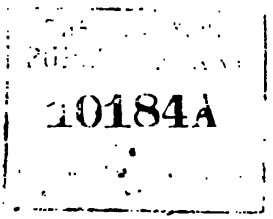
Publishers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These stories first appeared in the St. Joseph Sunday Gazette

This book
is lovingly dedicated
to my Mother

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The Ghost That Walks in the Full of the Moon.

"Sure we got a ghos' out here. It walks at the full of the moon the whole year 'round."

The small son of Missouri sat on the rail fence in a tangle of elder blossoms and falling wild roses. He was bare-footed, bare-headed, and sunburned to an Indian brownness. He jerked a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the little cemetery bathed now in the sunset's light.

"Yonder where's she buried—old Mammy. And across the road and down a piece is where her Missus is—old Madam Gray. She and her husband lays side by side in that cornfield. Where? Don't you see them four trees—pines? And that square clump of weeds? Well, behind them weeds and under them pines is a mon'ment. 'Sacred to the memory of John S. Gray and his wife, Mary.' If you was to go close enough you'd see a

piece chipped off that mon'ment. Shot off, it was, by the Jayhawkers. Old Mr. Gray died before the war and that's where they buried him. Madam died afterwards and her mammy after her. And old Mammy—her that's buried over yonder—she trots over to Madam's grave every full of the moon to see how her missus is getting along; see if she wants anything, you know."

His tone was convincing, his eyes were truthful. Clearly he believed his story. And after prolonged investigation it became evident that many others, not all of them small boys, believed it also. The beautiful little cemetery sloping down to the river holds many an interesting tale and the story of Madam Gray and her faithful Mammy is but a small part of a romance as thrilling as ever the old south knew.

In the early fifties young John Gray came from Alabama, bringing with him his new wife and more than a hundred slaves. The Grays of Alabama had been slave owners for more years than John could remember; and when he outgrew the old plantation and set out to carve his own destiny in new fields his father equipped him in feudal style

—stock, servants, household furnishings, money. We are not told what led John Gray to choose Missouri as his permanent home, but certainly no more beautiful spot exists than the acres he took for his own. The view of hill and valley, river and shore from the site of the old homestead is as lovely as anything America has to offer.

Here John Gray erected a mansion of—tradition has it—thirty-two rooms. It was a house reminiscent of Virginia. Tall white pillars upholding a wide gallery; a central hall of noble proportions; great high-ceilinged rooms in any one of which the modern in-a-door and in-the-wall apartment could be comfortably placed. The servants' quarters were some distance from the house, in the regulation southern style. A parklike stretch of lawn sloped from the mansion to the river. On either side and in the rear were broad fields and pastures where Kentucky thoroughbreds grazed side by side with the plebian Missouri mule. It all justified the imposing appellation of "the Gray Estate," and as such was known far and wide throughout the country.

As the children—three sons and a daugh-

ter—grew older the house became famous for its hospitality. Seldom were the many "chambers" empty of guests. Relatives from Alabama and relatives from Virginia and friends from Georgia and Kentucky and Maryland paid the Grays good old-fashioned visits of three months' length. There were weekly dances to which the young people of two counties were bidden, dances where the "refreshments" embraced a hearty meal of cold roast prairie chicken, beat' biscuit, cake of every kind known to the southern cook, and—be it said softly!—an array of liquids which had their origin principally in Kentucky. Which brings us up to Ralph Gray and his part in the story.

Ralph Gray was—convivial. That is the euphemistic way they put it then. He spent no time in looking on the wine when it was red; he knew a better use to which to put it. He employed that use so frequently and so thoroughly that he became known at last as the "wild Gray boy," and regarded a little hostilely, even in those tolerant times, by mothers of marriageable daughters. This distressed his mother, and was a source of continual shame and embarrassment to his

sister, Martin. (Her mother's maiden name was Martin and she—Martin Gray—eventually married a cousin on her mother's side, so that her name became Martin Martin, or something so like it that if you know your Missouri history you will have no difficulty in recognizing her.)

Let us pass on now to the more humble members of the family—the servants. Mammy Luce stands easily pre-eminent here. Mammy was a character. She was but a few years older than her mistress, but she bossed her as thoroughly as any sister does a younger brother. Miss Mary wore what Mammy selected for her; she rose when Mammy called her and "retired" when Mammy appeared portentiously at the door of the parlor or upon the porch, as the season demanded. Mammy disciplined the young Grays as though they were her own and they were far more in awe of her than they were of their father. Mr. Gray might bend his brows and threaten, but Mammy fetched her slipper and performed. And light as was her hand in the concoction of "whips" and creams and waffles, it was painfully heavy when young Johnny Gray was

called upon to account for a cake-rifled sideboard, or young Billy confessed to the theft of Mammy's good luck charm.

Now, faithful and efficient and altogether valuable as Mammy Luce was, she had one fault: she was regrettably extravagant in the matter of husbands. No sooner had custom staled the variety of Mose or Pete or Uncle Matt than Mammy discarded him in favor of a new partner. This led, as may be readily understood, to various family complications. For example, husband number four—Dave, let us call him—palled on Mammy after several years and went into the discard. Somewhere in the time of husband number six or seven, Dave took a new mate of his own who subsequently died and left him a small daughter, named Celeste. The mother of Celeste, actuated partly by maternal anxiety and partly a desire to give Mammy a thrust, explained to Mrs. Gray before she died, that the father of Celeste and the sometime husband of Mammy being one and the same person, it devolved upon Mammy Luce to care for Celeste as her own. Mammy was shocked. She was no stickler for conventionality, but her sense of decorum

received a sad jolt at the idea of this vicarious motherhood.

"Take keer of dat yallar gal's squallin' brat? Not effen Ah knows maself. Miss Ma'y wahn't gwine ask hit ob her, 'caze hit wahn't no use."

Not that Mammy minded the care of one more child. Her cabin so swarmed with pickaninnies of every shade, size and age that it is doubtful if she herself knew which were the transients and which permanent residents. It was the principle of the thing which upset Mammy; and when Mrs. Gray, backed amusedly by her husband, for once in her life held out against her dusky tyrant and placed Celeste under Mammy's roof until she should reach the age of independence, Mammy's rage and surprise knew no bounds. We may imagine that the little lemon-hued Celeste led a precarious existence, dodging the "smacks" of her reluctant guardian, badgered about by the more legitimate (to Mammy's mind) occupants of the cabin, and the object of half pitying contempt to the other negroes. Perhaps this affected her disposition; at any rate she grew up to be what Mammy characterized as "pizen mean."

When Mrs. Gray appointed her as Martin's personal maid, Mammy muttered darkly of the trouble her misguided mistress would live to see as a result of her disregard of Mammy's warnings.

John Gray died shortly before the war. In accordance with the country custom, he was laid to rest upon his own land, less than a quarter of a mile from the house. Four pine trees were planted at the grave, two at the head and two at the foot. A tall marble shaft topped by an eagle with wide-spread wings made an impressive mark for his resting place. An iron fence enclosed the whole and a seat was built just inside for Madam's use when she paid her evening visit to her husband's grave. "Going to say goodnight to father" became part of the routine of her days.

Not long after John Gray's death the unrest which had agitated the country burst into active demonstration against the Grays. For the most part their neighbors shared their own sympathy with the Confederate cause, but the unattached marauders which marked the border of both Missouri and Kansas territory for their own, began to trouble

the owner of the Gray estate. Every morning a fresh report of hen-houses rifled, stock driven off, outbuildings burned, made the mistress apprehensive for her own and her family's safety. And then one day Mammy, white of turban and of apron, stiff of skirts and of manner, approached her "missus."

"Ain't Ah done tell yo' 'bout dat no-count, yallar snake in de grass?" she demanded. "Wouldn't lissen to ol' Mammy when she 'splain de orneriness, and de pizenness, and de general cussedness of dat Celeste. Now Miss Ma'y gwine see foh herse'f effen ol' Mammy's a fool."

"What is it now, Mammy?" Mrs. Gray asked somewhat wearily.

For years she had been bombarded with accounts of Celeste's shortcomings until the subject was a sore one with both.

"What has Celeste done now? Worn Miss Martin's best hat to meeting, or run off with one of your boys?"

Mammy's eyes bulged with excitement.

"She done run off—yas'm—but hit ain't with nary nigger ob mine. Ah lay Ah bus' his haid open effen he try dat wid Celeste. She run off wid de Jayhawkers, yas'm."

"What is this, Mammy?" Mrs. Gray was

thoroughly startled. "Not Celeste? Not one of my own girls?"

Mammy nodded vigorously.

"Yas'm, hit was Celeste. De oberseer, he done repo't dis mawnin'. When Miss Ma'tin she ring fo' dat yallar gal dey ain't no one come—an' bimeby Sally, she done gib me de notification dat Celeste ain't slep' in her baid las' night. Ah 'tends to Miss Ma'tin ma own se'f an' den Ah went down to see Mist' Bradshaw. He say he heard a noise in de cawnfiel' 'bout one o'clock—dawgs barkin' an' voices. He call de boys and dey tek dey shotguns an' go outen de fiel'. An' foh dey get dere dey hear Celeste screechin'—Mist' Bradshaw he done recomnize her wilecat voice. Nobody dere when dey get dere—tromped de co'n down an' made dey gitaway t'roo de woods. Dey on de Kansas side fo' mawnin' sho' ".

Mrs. Gray recognized to the full the gravity of the situation. Nothing short of an armed force could succeed in finding and reclaiming the lost slave and that, she reluctantly admitted, was not to be thought of in the present condition of affairs. The only course to be adopted was that of caution; to

guard the remainder of her household as well as possible and to ignore Celeste's desertion.

That evening the farm bell summoned the negroes to the big house. The mistress stood on the verandah steps and addressed them briefly. She explained to them the troubled conditions of the country, promised them protection against the prowling gentry with which the land was infested, and appealed to their loyalty to her and hers. For the most part they responded with hearty good will. Shouts of "'Deed we'll stand by yo,' Miss Ma'y," "Yo' is sho' of us, Missus," came from many throats. But here and there the quick ear of the mistress detected a muttered dissent, and her practiced gaze selected several pairs of shifting eyes and averted heads. When she ascended the stairs to her room that night she knew that the time was almost ready for a flight or a fight—and which it was to be depended largely on her own courage and will. We can imagine her standing long at the window, looking out upon the marble shaft in the distance. We can think of her as yearning for the broad shoulders which had for so long carried the

burdens now threatening to become too heavy for her slender ones. When she stole through the sleeping house, across the dew drenched lawn to that fenced enclosure, it was with that longing for the bodily nearness of her loved one which is the hardest part of any bereavement. So she went to her husband's grave and Mammy went with her—respectfully, a few paces to the rear. The two figures had nearly reached their goal when Mammy clutched her mistress' sleeve, her eyes rolling fearfully in her head.

"Fo' de Lawd's sake, Miss Ma'y! Looka yondah!"

Mrs. Gray followed the pointing of the dusky finger. Through the grove of trees leading from the river came a squad of men in nondescript uniforms. The only feature common to them all was the rifle slung over each shoulder. They tramped boldly forward, careless of possible observation. The women crept into the shelter of a group of flowering bushes. Within touching distance of the iron fence the men paused. A low toned conference, punctuated by coarse guffaws, reached the straining ears of Madam Gray. Then the men drew up in line, leveled their guns and began to shoot at the marble

shaft. They were poor enough marksmen, but at that distance it was easy to accomplish what they sought to do. Chips of the shaft began to fly and bullets spattered about the bushes where Mammy and her trembling mistress crouched. At the same time the dogs in the house kennels set up an uproar and lights appeared in several windows. The men continued their contemptuous bombardment until the triumphant eagle disappeared from the monument. The party from the house, made up of the Gray sons, the overseer and the negro house servants, had nearly reached the spot before the marauders made their escape with the same air of bravado they had employed throughout the performance.

Mrs. Gray and Mammy, the latter a seething, sputtering embodiment of red rage, were helped back to the house, and a counsel of war was held. It was decided that Mrs. Gray and her youngest son should attempt to escape to Alabama with the more valuable of the negroes. The other two Gray boys were to remain on guard at home. Martin had already been dispatched to relatives farther south and her mother felt no anxiety concerning her safety.

It was no light task to prepare for the journey of twenty grown men and women whose experience of travel was negligible. Never had Mammy's executive ability shown to better advantage. She corralled the strays, encouraged and exhorted the laggards, tyranized over her mistress with loving solicitude. Under difficulties undreamed of today the party arrived in Alabama at last and there our concern with them all except Mrs. Gray and Mammy ends.

The Emancipation Proclamation in the course of time scattered them like leaves before the wind. Of the twenty-two negroes "Miss Mary" took with her, Mammy was the only one she brought back. And Mammy persisted that it was a desire to "lay fo' Celeste" which actuated her return, rather than her love for her white folks. She loved to assert her independence of the Grays, to declare that she was just as free as any of the rest of the niggers; but at the first hint of leaving her behind Mammy was reduced to tears and pleadings to be taken home "whah we-all lib lak de gentry we is."

Alas for Mammy's hopes of her old home. All that remained of the stately mansion was a heap of charred timbers and scattered,

blackened bricks. At the very beginning of hostilities it had been set afire. Its size and magnificence made it a mark for every band of outlaws that skirted the regular army. The blame of this wanton destruction can be laid neither to the Confederate Army nor to the Union. It was the work of the human scum which traveled in the wake of the regulars and made life a terror to unprotected homes. The Gray boys had fled to neighbors less prominent than they and therefore less exposed to persecution. But before they went they had been forced to see their beautiful home destroyed, family treasures looted from their hiding places, even their father's grave desecrated by the vagabonds who scrawled unprintable pleasantries on the marble surface of the shaft.

Now for the last chapter of the Grays' eventful history. Mrs. Gray and Mammy came home in '69. One of her sons had married and built a wooden shack on the site of the old mansion. Here Miss Mary took up the worn thread of her life with only one wish—to live in sight of her husband's grave and lie beside him at the last. Here Mammy came also to cook and wash and tend the

next generation of Grays as they made their appearance.

The years rolled on. Mrs. Gray's brown hair and Mammy's wool alike showed a sprinkling of white. Mammy's disposition did not improve with the mellowing of time, but rather became more acid. The defection of Celeste was an obsession with her. In some occult manner she had become convinced that all the trouble the war had brought upon the family would have been averted had it not been for the treachery of Dave's yallar gal. Rheumatism claimed Mammy for its own. She had a fresh mis'ry for each new day. Mrs. Gray tried to induce her to give up the hard work which the slowly improving fortunes of the family made no longer necessary. She offered to send Mammy south again that the waters of some sulphur spring might help the aching joints. But Mammy stubbornly refused both offers. She lived for the day when her enemy should be delivered into her hands and all she had suffered and her white folks had suffered through Celeste should be avenged.

This day came, and through the unconscious assistance of Ralph Gray. He had

grown more reckless with the loss of his fortunes and in a drunken affray one night broke his leg. Mammy was sent for to nurse him. The first person she saw as she stepped from the covered wagon which brought her was the recreant Celeste. They tell now in that town in awe-stricken tones of the cyclone of fury which burst upon the saffron Celeste. The old woman's stubby black fingers fastened about the girl's throat. Her feet in their shapeless congress gaiters beat a steady tatto upon Celeste's shins. It took several men to pry her loose and her victim was a fit subject for first aid when this was finally accomplished. Bystanders held Mammy's hands; controlled her revengeful feet; but they were powerless to still her furious tongue. The yallar gal shrank and trembled before the volley of invective which racketed about her ears.

Mammy described to her in intimate detail the personnel of her ancestry; predicted for her the fiery future which her master, Ole Satan, was at that identical moment making ready. Mammy had dabbled a bit in Voodooism and Celeste's yellow face turned green as she learned that "nary foot on nary rabbit whut ebber hopped gwine to save yo'

f'um de bites and stings and de tearin' limb f'um limb dat de debbils gwine to do to yo.' Mek yo' peace, gal, fo' yo' las' hour done come! When de cocks begin to crow dę new day, when de snake uncoil hisse'l f'um de tree whah he sleep and come aslidin' an' aglidin' tod de baid whah yo' lay, den hits time fo' yo' to rise an' put on yo' windin' sheet and prepaih to meet yo' Gawd, fo' nothin' ain't gwine to save yo' wuthless hide now."

The old woman was spent and breathless when they finally dragged her to the room where Ralph Gray awaited her ministrations; but her condition was buoyant and energetic compared to that of Celeste. She went from one convulsion of terror into another and it is affirmed died just at cockcrow the next morning. Mammy nursed the consciousness of duty well done. She related over and over again to an intensely interested audience comprising black and white alike, the satisfying details of her revenge. She regarded it as a clear mark of Heaven's approval of her that Celeste had met the exact fate Mammy had prescribed for her. Mrs. Gray's shocked remonstrances fell on deaf ears. Mammy was justified in her own conscience and nothing else mattered.

Mammy Luce outlived her Miss Mary by many years. She was popularly supposed to be nearing her hundredth birthday when one night at sunset she summoned the household about her. She was a queer little figure, shriveled and shrunken and toothless. Her once heavy hands were veritable claws; her snapping black eyes smouldered dully in their cavernous sockets. Her voice was a mere thread of sound. But she hobbled down the road which led to the little cemetery established many years ago by old John Gray as a burying place for his slaves, and paused at the gate to address her followers.

"Ah's gwine to quit this fool, no-count world," she said. "Ah's done libed all Ah cares to. Bu'y me right here," she thumped with her cane on the grass, "by the gate whah Ah can get out easy. Ah has to see to Miss Ma'y's grave lak Ah always does. Yo' niggers got to weed it an' ten' it and keep de flowers bloomin' fresh an' purty on it, lak Ah done showed yo' all dese years. Ah's comin' back in de full ob de moon to see has yo' done lak Ah tole yo'. Effen you ain't—" she paused and her menacing gaze swept the terrified faces before her. "Well,

yo'-all remembehs what Ah done to dat Celeste."

Knowing the value of the climax unadorned, Mammy added nothing to this statement. Instead she turned and hobbled back to her cabin. They found her sleeping the next morning, oblivious to a world she was done with and which wearied her. Her last instructions were carried out to the letter. In a sunken grave near the cemetery's gate Mammy lies, though not even a rotting headboard marks her bed. And if the reader's curiosity is great enough to lead him through the ridges of a plowed cornfield and across the hills of a potato patch, he can see for himself old John Gray's and Miss Mary's graves. They are no longer kept as they were in Mammy's time. Her edict has lost its force with another generation. Weeds which tower above one's head enclose the iron fence which surrounds the graves. But the monument with its chipped summit is there; and the remnants of the seat where Mrs. Gray sat for so many sad hours. And tradition—at least among the boys of the neighborhood—has it that when the moon's light is whitest, and the tall shaft in the cornfield casts no shadow, then does Mammy

Luce leave her couch and clad in white turban and apron, with the stiffest of skirts and of manner, waddle down the road to tend her mistress' grave. Woe betide the luckless urchin who would seek to impede that stately progress!

Mammy's Song.

Whipperwill awailin' in de bluegum tree,
Wailin', yallar gal, 'count ob you—
Owl's eyes abulgin' at de awful things he see,
Yallar gal, yallar gal, tell true!

Bullsnake aweavin' t'roo de long wet grass,
Weavin', yallar gal, straight at you—
Toad an' spider dodgin' fo' to let him pass,
Yallar gal, yallar gal, tell true!

Voodoo ha'nt aknockin' at de haid ob de baid,
Knockin', yallar gal, arter you—
Nebber know no sleepin' till dat ghos' am laid,
Yallar gal, yallar gal, tell true!

Tell de way yo' sneakin' to de ribber's bank,
Pizen yallar gal, dat was you!
Tell de why yo' sol' Miss Ma'y to de Yank—
Yallar gal, yallar gal, tell true!

A Missouri Apple Blossom.

A girl sat on the old stone rampart which girded the river. Before her flowed the gray, sluggish waters of the old Missouri, behind her was an apple orchard in full bloom. Something of the fragrance, the pink and white sweetness of the blossoming trees was reflected in the girl's face. She might have posed as young April as she perched, slim, alert, adorably young and buoyant on the crumbling wall. A meadow lark called from the depths of the orchard. Instantly her clear whistle gave back the call.

"Perfect!" commented the young man who came leisurely from under the drooping branches. "I'd forgotten you could do that, Nanette."

Her gray eyes opened wide. Nobody had called her Nanette since Jim went away. She remained motionless, with the curious listening attitude of some wood creature.

"Why, Nanette, don't you know me? I

knew you the minute I saw your pink sunbonnet through the trees. You wore that bonnet—or one exactly like it—and you sat just there when I told you goodby four years ago."

She caught her breath in a little broken cry.

"Jim! It's really you, Jim? Oh! I can't believe it."

He laughed and caught her slim brown hands in his.

"It's Jim all right, Nanette, dear. Your old chum, come back after all this time. Are you glad to see me?"

Under his direct gaze she was flushing and paling, her eyes traveling wistfully from his well cut clothes to her own faded gingham.

"You've changed, Jim," she said shyly. "It's not just your clothes, either. You look powerful grownup and manful."

"Four years in college ought to make some difference," he answered lightly. "When I think of the know-it-all rube I was when I left here, I wonder they ever let me in at school."

Her eyes made indignant denial of his words, but she said nothing. Instead, acting

"Yes, this land has been our No Man's Land, hasn't it?" His eyes turned to the low, grassy mound whose head was marked by a huge apple tree. "Poor little fickle mother. I wonder why she did it? Does my father still come here at night, Nanette?"

"Yes." She slid from the wall and leaned her elbows on the rampart. "Did you know the river is cutting on this side again, Jim?"

He leaned beside her. "Is it? Not badly, I hope."

"Oh, but it is. Old Mr. Bates has lost six acres of his alfalfa field already and is likely to lose it all if the current doesn't change."

"It's a doggoned shame the legislature doesn't do something about it. Why don't all the farmers get together and protest?"

"Protest?" She gave a wry little smile. "You've been away so long you've forgotten how little good it does to protest. The government sent an expert down this spring and he said nothing could be done—the current is too strong here. It would cost millions of dollars to put in the right kind of a dam and after the old one gave way ten years ago the people don't want to try it again. But think of all this rich bottom land going into the river."

"Maybe it won't cut any more," he suggested hopefully.

She regarded him in amazement tinged with reproach.

"Have you forgotten the June rise? You are changed, Jim. You used to know this old river as well as I do and I've spent every day of my life beside it. I—I didn't want you to change, Jim."

He bent above her, his handsome face laughing into her own.

"You'll find I haven't changed in one respect, Nanette," he said significantly. "I'm just as fond of my little playmate now as I was when I went away. You kissed me good-by then, Nanette. Haven't you any greeting for me now?"

She hung her head, the rosy color creeping up to the tumbled curls on her forehead.

"I'm too big for—kissing now. Besides—I reckon you met lots of other girls—city girls, and pretty girls and—with lovely manner and wonderful clothes—"

"So I did," he answered lightly. "City girls and pretty girls; dainty girls and painty girls; homely girls and comely girls; but none as sweet and altogether charming as my little Missouri apple blossom." He kept his

voice gay, but his eyes searched her face earnestly. Truth to tell, his heart was leaping with almost painful joy. He had carried the image of this girl with him in all the years away from her, comparing her with the over-sophisticated, ultra modern maidens who had been his companions. He had admitted their superiority, admired their brain power, but he yearned for the untouched sweetness of the little playmate he had left. His own ideals, viewpoints and ambitions had changed—why not hers? It was reasonable to suppose the years had robbed her of some of the flowerlike freshness which had been her charm for him. But in the few minutes he had looked into her eyes, had studied the tender curve of the rosy mouth, he had known that his boyhood's sweetheart was still his own. His hands clenched in the longing to draw the bright head to his breast, to gather in his again the slim brown hands busy with the bits of mortar between the stones. Some instinct bade him refrain. Apple blossoms are fragile, easily crumpled blooms. He must touch this flower with gentle fingers.

So he talked in his pleasant voice of the river, of her father and his, of their neigh-

bors. He told her of his college, and made for her pleasure a bright mosaic of his life there. When the sun began to dip below the green hills she bade him goodby with the old trusting confidence she had used to display.

May drifted by like a rosy dream for the two young people. Day after day they met at the gray old ramparts and each day marked a new milestone on their journey of love. The apple blossoms whitened and fell, a fragrant re-creation of winter's snows. May apples hurried to fill the air with perfume in their stead and before they were quite gone the wild crab swung a censer of sweetness in honor of the Spring. Everywhere its coral buds and pink blossoms shed an irresistible and insistent fragrance. The robins ceased their spring song, but from the fence corners the meadow larks whistled and sang.

Only the sullen river, gnawing treacherously at its banks, sounded a somber note in the young year's symphony. Day after day it ate farther into the land. Old Bates lost not only his alfalfa fields but his home pastures. His house was threatened and the women packed tearfully against a hurried

move. So far the encroachment had not reached the Langham and Cramer property, but unless the current was deflected before the June rise, it was certain to work devastation.

"Listen!" Nanette said one afternoon. "There goes another hundred tons of good Missouri land."

From far up the river sounded a heavy roar, the river cannonade as the land yielded to the insidious pressure. These crashes were more and more frequent of late and always nearer. The two on the rampart could see the far-flung spray of the last debouchment.

"Sweetheart, I don't believe it's safe for you to come here any longer," Jim said reluctantly. "I don't want to frighten you, but pretty soon this rampart will go. Promise me you'll meet me farther back in the orchard tomorrow."

As he spoke there was an ominous hissing not a hundred yards above them. The ground heaved, wavered for a perceptible instant, then slid with a mighty boom into the yawning waters below. The hungry river closed over it and resumed its silent siege of the earth abutting.

The young man's face was pale as he drew Nanette away.

"I had no business to run such a risk," he chided himself. "That might as easily have been this point as that. Come, dear, let's go."

"Your mother's grave, Jim," she said softly as they passed under the trees. "Do you suppose it will go too?"

"God knows," he answered reverently. "I'm afraid it will kill Dad if it does. I found him out here again last night and I had hard work to get him away. I'm going to watch him tonight."

By sunset the river had begun its work on the Langham acres. Peter Langham patrolled his fields, watching with anguished heart the land he had tended so many years slip into the river. His house was on the farther boundary, so he did not fear for that, but he knew that in any case his wheat fields were doomed. As the twilight deepened the farmers began to congregate on the bank, some to bemoan their own losses, others with land farther in, to condole with their unfortunate neighbors. Darkness came, relieved only by a wan new moon. One by one the men drifted despondently away,

and finally old Langham himself went to bed.

A little past midnight young Jim woke with a start and an impression that someone had opened and shut a door. He rose and went into his father's room. The bed was empty. He dressed hurriedly. His father's habit of visiting his wife's grave after nightfall was one of long standing but Jim knew that now it was no longer safe to venture out on that point. He followed the path made in many years by the old man's feet, and overtook him as he let himself down painfully on the grass beside the mound.

"Father," Jim remonstrated, "you mustn't come out here like this. It's too damp for you. You'll be down in bed tomorrow." He dared not, for fear of the old man's stubborn resistance, mention the probability of the land's giving way. "Come, father," he pleaded. "Take my arm over the rough places and let me help you home. I'll fix something hot when we get there."

"Go yourself if you want to," old Jim said harshly. "I calc'late to stay here a spell."

Resignedly his son settled himself to wait. At intervals the roar and boom of the sliding earth shattered the quiet of the night. His

gaze wandered to the spot where he and Nanette had stood that afternoon and he started, rubbing his eyes in amazement. Where was the rampart? Where was the arm of land which curved into the river? Gone! An avalanche of fresh earth showed where the stone wall had slid downward. Fully half an acre had been devoured since they stood there chatting.

A mighty crash, louder than any previous, woke him from his trance. The river had seized on the jutting point and was swallowing it greedily. It was dangerous to be so near. Determinedly he strode to where his father sat half dozing, but before he could speak another voice broke the silence.

"So you're here, Jim Cramer, air ye?" A shadowy figure stood out in the faint light. "Come to say goodby to the wife ye stole, hev ye? You're going to lose her at last, Jim; you're going to lose her and I'm agoin' to stay here and see."

Old Jim reared himself from the grass.

"Get away from here, Peter Langham. You ain't no business on my land. You tried hard enough once to get it away from me but you didn't do it."

"No—but you're agoin' to lose it now. The

old river is stronger'n I be or than you be either. You was smart enough to get my land and my gal away from me but you wasn't smart enough to keep ary one. You got to give 'em up now, Jim, you got to give 'em up. Your orchard and your wife—both into the river—and me here to see 'em go." He laughed spitefully and came a step nearer. "I've waited nigh onto a quarter of a century for this and now it's come I calc'late to enjoy it."

"Dad," young Jim pleaded. "Don't answer him. Come home with me."

His father brushed him aside with hands that trembled.

"Let me alone, Jim. You, Peter Langham, ain't ye got no shame? If it's true her grave's got to go, is it decent to laugh? It's my land and my wife and I won't have you watchin'."

"How're ye goin' to help it? I'm standin' on my own land. Eh, what is it? Nan! What air ye doin' here? Back to bed with you, I say!"

She was panting, and trembling with terror of the hideous booming, of the primeval passions unveiling before her young eyes.

"Daddy, Daddy, come home with me! Jim, can't you make him come?"

The piteous appeal in her voice banished all else from Jim's mind. He strode across the intervening space and gathered her into his arms.

"Honey, why did you come? You mustn't stay here. Let me take—" His arm was roughly seized from behind and he turned to face the blaze of fury in old Langham's eyes.

"Ye durned whelp of a cowardly cur! Turn loose of my gal. Let her be, I say! What's she to you that gives you the right to touch her?"

"She's my sweetheart, my promised wife," Jim said sturdily. "I would have told you when the right time came to do so. Ah!" He caught the lean fist which shot out with such surprising rapidity and held it tautly in his own. "Don't do that, Mr. Langham. You know I can't strike Nanette's father."

Peter whirled and confronted old Jim. His face was contorted into a mask of anger.

"You knew this, I reckon? I see it all now. You put him up to it. It wasn't enough that you stole one gal from me, but you must sick your boy on to stealin' another.

Ain't ye never going to be done with your damned thievin'? Give my Nan to a son of yours? I'd sooner see her lyin' there with her that ought to a-been her mother." His voice, high pitched and shrill, broke with his fury. He started toward old Jim, his arms extended menacingly. Nan clung to his arm but he hurled her from him and with a frightened sob she crept to the foot of the apple tree. Jim interposed the strong barrier of his young body between the two men, both of whom were by now fairly beside themselves with passion.

"Stole, did I? You wasn't enough of a man to keep her true to you even for a month. I told her you was married to a gal in New York and she come to my arms like a mournin' dove. I lied to her and I stole her from you and I'm glad of it. She didn't live but a year but she lived that year in my house and she died in my arms. I ain't sorry I done it. I'd do it again if 'twas to do over again—" he was unconsciously retreating, as he talked, before the threat of the other's approach.

They were well within the orchard before an ominous hiss and crackle warned them of their peril. For one frozen instant they

held their positions like actors before the camera. Then with a hoarse cry Jim sprang for Nanette. He was too late. With a crack the ground had parted in a deep fissure and even as he reached the edge the strip of land holding the grave plunged downward into the darkness. He caught one glimpse of Nanette's pink dress, heard her despairing cry of "Jim! Jim" and the gray waves closed over the latest sacrifice.

"God! My little gal! Oh, God, my little gal! God, won't ye save my little gal?" her father was crying over and over.

Jim was hunting desperately in the semi-darkness for the firmest point of descent. With an uncanny divination of his purpose his father threw himself in the way.

"Jim you shan't. It's suicide, boy. She's lost in the whirlpools by now."

At that Peter Langham burst into a bitter wail.

"Can't ye save her, Jim? Young Jim, ain't ye goin' to save your sweetheart? I said I'd sooner see her down there with Letty but God knows I didn't mean it. Young Jim, you're powerful young and strong! Ain't I seen you faunchin' 'round this two months back? Down with ye, boy—" he stopped,

conscious that he was talking to empty space. Young Jim had disappeared down the crevice.

The two above listening breathlessly heard the dull thud of the clods in his wake. He had no hope as he plunged downward. He knew the treacherous whirlpools of the old river. He had seen huge trees sucked into its maw like chips in the eddies of a brook. He was actuated only by an agonized impulse to move, to dull the edge of his horror by violent action no matter how futile.

He had reached the bottom of the slope now. He could feel the spray-softened earth beneath his feet, hear the creaming of the water against the raw edge of the land.

"Nanette!"

He threw all the agony of his young heart into that cry. His little girl, his sweetheart! How wild with fright she must have been when she struck the water! He could see her little white face whirling down in the dreadful suction, hear her despairing cry to him to save her. His apple blossom—bruised and tossed by the merciless waves, dashed against floating log and sandbar until battered, beaten, but mercifully senseless at last, she drifted among the weeds of some far-off bayou. Nanette! Made for love and

laughter and sunshine—tossing there in the darkness and cold.

From above Peter Langham's voice came faintly, alternately pleading and moaning. Occasionally his father's tones intervened. But Jim's ears were dulled to all but that last cry of "Jim! Jim!" She had called and he had failed her. In all their years together he had never failed her before. There was the time she had pulled down the gray hornets' nest and run screaming to him in pain and fright. He wrapped his coat about her and bore the brunt of the attack as they ran away. When the top limb of the old cherry tree broke she called to him and he broke her fall at the expense of many bruises to himself. And now in the hour of her sorest need she had called to him and he had not come in time. He groaned aloud in the anguish of his realization—and then his heart stopped and his tongue grew dry in his mouth.

"Jim—Jim—"

Was it her voice, or was his dizzy brain betraying him?

"Jim!"

Faint and smothered it came, but unmistakably Nanette's voice. The blood came

had given way. Nanette shuddered and buried her face in her lover's shoulder. Over her head Jim looked at Peter Langham.

"My father wronged you terribly, Mr. Langham. I know it and he knows it, don't you, Dad? But my mother gave your girl back to you—and to me. Will you call the account square?"

"That I will, boy," the old man said brokenly. "Jim, you're a durned old thievin' skunk, but ye got a boy that's excuse and apology enough for ye. Come over tomorrow, young Jim, and we'll settle the weddin' details."

He turned away with a great show of red handkerchief. Old Jim plodded along to his home.

Jim lifted the face hidden against his coat.

"Honey dear," he said in the speech of his Missouri childhood, "Honey dear, I'm just ahonin' for you. Will you come to me soon?"

It was too dark to see her eyes, but a small brown hand, scratched and bruised from the apple branches, stole up and touched his lips. It was answer enough for young Jim.

The Tale of the Freckled Twins.

This is the tale of the freckled twins, Miss Mitty Con, and the irascible lawyer. It is also Aunt Celia's love story. The fact that Aunt Celia was well on the shady side of forty and black as the ace of spades does not detract in the least from her romance.

To begin with, the freckled twins were not really twins. There was something over a year's difference in their ages, but they were exactly alike in size, coloring and features, and everybody referred to them as the freckled twins. Speaking of coloring—when the twins were sixteen they were an interesting study in auburn and brown. Their hair was auburn, though Aunt Celia called it, uncompromisingly, red; their eyes were dark brown and their freckles light brown. Their hands and the length of wrist which protruded from their rapidly outgrown sleeves were a delicate champagne shade on which freckles stood out boldly. They were

distinctly unornamental—at sixteen. Miss Mitty Con, who had been christened Mehitable Constance, sighed despairingly whenever she looked at them. And she was obliged to look at them frequently for they were of that class of children of whom the neighbors say primly that they "will bear watching."

It was an ironical fate which placed two such young hoydens as Phyllis and Lois in the care of so conventional, unimaginative and altogether proper a person as Miss Mitty Con. From the first day when she arrived to look after her brother's motherless little ones, and found the little ones on the roof of the house ell, provided with a quilt, a bottle of raspberry shrub, half a dozen apples and a jar of cookies to set up housekeeping with, until the unknown aunt had returned to her home in Boston—from that never-to-be-forgotten day up to the hour of Lois' marriage, Miss Mitty Con's life was just one long series of shocks. But Miss Mitty Con was so easily shocked, the twins said plaintively. The most ordinary incidents of daily living, like playing conquer on the topmost limbs of the soft maple tree, and swapping their week's pocket money for

a squirrel which lurked in the folds of the living room portieres and sprang unexpectedly upon Miss Mitty Con's shoulder when she came down late at night after hot milk, upset her to a degree perfectly incomprehensible to the blunted susceptibilities of the twins.

Miss Mitty Con's brother, who was likewise the father of Phyllis and Lois, has been referred to as irascible. By the time the twins were sixteen there was not enough hair remaining to him to show its color, but his acquaintances had no difficulty in tracing his daughters' fiery locks to their proper source. The lawyer—have we said that his name was Silas M. Holiday?—and his offspring maintained their family relations by means of verbal explosions, wordy battles and silences charged with suppressed language. Life in the big white frame house was never monotonous. Poor Miss Mitty Con never knew what a meal would bring forth. Many times a week did she retire in silent dignity to her room, leaving the battle raging in the dining room below.

Right here seems to be the time to introduce Aunt Celia upon the scene, for it was usually at this point that she introduced her-

self. When Silas M. reached the climax of his enraged oration—when he got to that sentence in which he referred tenderly to his daughters as "pesky, red-headed devils, sent for the sole and only purpose, as far as I can see, of making a man appreciate the silence of the grave," then would Aunt Celia stalk purposefully in from the kitchen. Unlike the ideal retainer of the old times, Aunt Celia did not waddle. To be perfectly accurate, she had nothing to waddle with, that term implying a surplus supply of comfortable padding. Aunt Celia was gaunt and tall, and she had a face which combined the profile of a hatchet with the front view of a tubercular horse. No one in his senses would ever call Aunt Celia mammy. Her dusky bosom was never designed to pillow childish heads, and Aunt Celia never went against nature. But those huge, bony hands of hers could perform miracles with skillet and bowl, pastry board and chopping knife.

Aunt Celia's fried oysters! And Aunt Celia's light rolls! And Aunt Celia's mince pies! There was that Christmas when Silas M. had as his guests the prominent attorney who divides his time between Columbia and another and less deserving city, and that

other eminent person who is rapidly taking a foremost place in Missouri letters, to say nothing of the magnate who very nearly had a college named for him recently. Ask them if they remember that turkey of Aunt Celia's stuffing; that smoking heap of corn dodgers, crisp and brown with the meltingness of a candy kiss in a July sun; that hickory smoked, sugar cured Virginia ham—but why awake old longings, rouse forgotten memories in these piping times of near-butter, and almost-cream and sugar at a day's wages the pound? Let us take as our own the old king's philosophy, "This, too, will pass"; evoke the power of suggestion and convince ourselves that the substance we are paying good money for is real food—and pass on to Aunt Celia.

Aunt Celia, then, at the psychological moment, would stalk in from her kitchen, fix Silas M. with a menacing eye, sweep the twins from their places with one motion of her long arm, and commence her work of clearing the table. If the dessert had been served, so much the better for the diners. If it had not they might as well emulate the Arab and silently steal away, for not another morsel of food would be served at

that table until the next meal. Silas M., glimpsing through the open door the delectable sight of his favorite pudding would sigh, and wonder why in thunder he couldn't learn to hold his tongue; then rise and go meekly to his library there to muse bitterly over the feminine character as he knew it in its various manifestations under his roof. Aunt Celia's way was excellent discipline and it would undoubtedly have had a permanent effect on any family less temperamental than the Holidays.

Aunt Celia did not live with her white folks. She had her own establishment, a tiny, three-roomed house at the foot of the hill on which the Holiday residence stood. It was one of the twins' greatest treats to visit the little home. Her rear room was kitchen and dining room combined; the middle room was bedroom and sitting room in a similar combination; but the front room—ah, that was The Room. You could hear the capitals in Aunt Celia's voice every time she mentioned it. It was known to Phyl as The Death Chamber. Lois called it The Dying Room. It contained a black rag rug on a black painted floor; a black dresser whose drawers held Aunt Celia's shroud, and

the sheets and night gear to be used in her last sickness. The bed was mountainous with feathers, white and shining in its immaculate counterpane and stiffly starched pillow slips. There were "shams," lace edged and appropriately embroidered in black. There was one black wooden chair designed to hold the doctor or the principal mourner during the last sad hours. As the twins themselves counted on filling this office they argued hotly against the injustice of the single seat. Did Aunt Celia expect them to take turns sitting, or was she thinking of having them sit in each other's laps? The owner of all this forehandedness only smiled inscrutably when the subject was broached. It left the twins with the uneasy feeling of there being a dark horse in the race so to speak. Or as Lois put it, "a nigger in the woodpile somewhere." And as it turned out it was literally just that.

Aunt Celia was rheumatic and found the hard couch in the sitting room ill-suited to her painful joints. But no amount of persausion, no pleading of the twins or remonstrance from Miss Mitty Con would induce the householder to crush the soft comfort of that bed. Aunt Celia 'lowed she was

gwine to die decent. No scrambling about seeking the properties for ber big scene. When they bore her inanimate but still feebly breathing form to her little home they (the twins always supposed they were meant by that "they" and glanced dubiously at Aunt Celia's stalwart proportions) was gwine to fin' she wahn't none of them slack, no-count niggers that didn't keer how they met their Maker. The hemstitched sheets was in the bottom drawer and the money for her funeral was in the hole in the floor under the baid; and she'd like to have Unc' Zeke play Nero My Gawd to Thee at the services.

Lois and Phyl promised to attend to the details faithfully. During their childhood they watched Aunt Celia with a calculating eye, and felt distinctly defrauded that she put off this interesting entertainment so long.

Now we'll skip along from the time that Phyl was sixteen and Lois fifteen to the year that Phyl was nineteen and Lois eighteen. From the long legged, freckled, awkward period to that radiant hour when they made their bow to formal society and were dubbed by the society reporter of "The Missouri Statesman," "the exquisite Holiday sisters."

They were exquisite, too. It was the old story of the ugly duckling. It is a well established fact that that fowl had red hair and freckles; that sort always turns out to be a real beauty in the end. The freckles vanished as if by magic and permitted an admiring world to see for the first time the roses and cream underneath. The red hair lost some of its violence, but nothing of its luxuriant silkiness. The angular wrists became softly rounded and the years in the big maple tree had developed a willowy grace unknown to the lady children who sat properly in the house and sewed their samplers.

Silas M. awakened to the fact one morning that he had two young beauties on his hands. He took it badly. They had been torment enough with their childish mischief; now he supposed there would be a parcel of young fools underfoot, coming to court the redheads. His fears were amply justified. No sooner were the girls taken out of their short skirted ginghams, and garbed in the laces and ruffles of young maidenhood, their glorious hair piled high on their little heads, and their clear voices subdued to a conventional pitch than the masculine youth of the town rose to meet its opportunity. The big porch

of the Holiday home was nightly infested with young men. Silas M., seeking a secluded spot to read his paper, wandered from honeysuckle-hung corner to rose-draped bower, and found no seclusion. His irascibility held a certain note of pride in these days. No father, were he ever so redheaded in his salad days, could refrain from a thrill at the sight of the twins, adorably sweet in their white gowns, so surrounded. Silas M. was right easy to live with these days, Miss Mitty Con announced complacently; and Aunt Celia almost lost the habit of stalking in from the kitchen to quell the storm. The Holidays had dessert almost every day.

The little rift within the lute—the little speck upon the garnered fruit—was not long in making its appearance. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward and Tom Wade was born to an extra lot of it. No sooner did Silas M. mark young Tom's appearance among the throng on the Holiday porch than Tom began to come into quite a bit of his inheritance. The master of the house summoned the twins from their guests, closed the library door and demanded, in tones which made that precaution utterly useless, what the blankety blank that son of the

blankety blank miser of a blank Wade was doing on his porch. He'd be everlastingly blanked if he'd put up with the presence of one of those blanked Wades on his porch. And the sooner that Phyllis or Lois or whichever it was invited the young blankety blank let him understand that he couldn't sit on Silas M.'s porch, the better it would be for all parties concerned. Lois' new demureness fled from her in an instant. In tones quite as redhaired as those of her father she remarked that young Mr. Wade was a person welcomed in the best society; that just because her father possessed a temper which turned perfectly delightful people into violent enemies was no reason why she and Phyl shouldn't entertain the son of one of those enemies if they cared to; and they distinctly did care to; and they would continue to entertain young Wade as hospitably as possible.

Aunt Celia unfortunately was not there to stalk. She was in her own home making up the death bed afresh. She did this systematically every night when she got home, which was a worthy habit but which kept her from lingering in the Holiday kitchen. Otherwise she might have averted the row which penetrated clear to the porch and

reached the ears of young Tom himself. He had no difficulty in recognizing his name; nor was he at a loss to ascertain the meaning of the adjectives so generously accompanying the slightest mention of that name. He rose and made his way to the library, and shortly afterwards the row became a riot. When the shouting and the tumult died the accumulated results were:

First: Tom Wade or any other offscouring of that blankety blank fool old Wade was distinctly forbidden to darken the Holiday doors again.

Second: No daughter of Silas M. was to speak to, converse with, or hold any manner of communication with the said offscouring.

Third: Should it come to the ears of Silas M. that either of these edicts had been broken there'd be some fancy shooting going on, by George, and two redheaded torments would find themselves in a convent before they could say Jack Robinson!

What followed was exactly what might have been expected. Lois and Tom, hitherto the most casual of acquaintances, fell mightily in love with each other. It wasn't a week after the lively session in the Holiday library before they were meeting secretly in a down-

town confectionery. Secretly that is, as far as their father was concerned, for the whole town aided and abetted the promising young love affair. Not a party was given that summer that Tom and Lois were not paired off by the sympathetic hostess. They danced and drove and strolled together all the long Missouri summer, and before the first frost they had decided that they simply could not live without each other. So of course there remained nothing to do but to get married. You can see that this was the only logical course to take; but you can also see that wedded life implies housekeeping facilities; and housekeeping facilities cost money.

Lois had several thousands left her by her mother, but these were to come to her only at the end of her twentieth year or at the time of her marriage, provided that marriage had her father's approval. Lois didn't waste a minute speculating about that money. She knew the color of her father's approval. Tom was reading law in his father's office (old Wade was a lawyer, too, and almost as irascible as Silas M., which explains the cause of all those blankety blanks) and had only an allowance for personal expenses. An interview with Wade senior produced nothing but

an outburst of sentiment oddly reminiscent of Silas M.'s remarks. And just about this time there arrived on the scene a young cousin of Silas M.'s whom that gentleman immediately and violently backed as his candidate in the race for Lois's hand. Something decisive had to be done immediately—and something was.

The perfect short story, as every student of that branch of literature knows, should carry a secondary interest. That is, a mystery tale should involve a minor mystery; a love story should be woven about with a lesser romance. It was Aunt Celia who supplied the secondary interest. Aunt Celia! Of all people, Aunt Celia! She of the horse-and-hatchet face! She whose contempt of the stronger sex amounted to fanaticism! She who rejoiced at the disastrous outcome of every unfortunate marriage!

Aunt Celia fell in love. With a man. With a colored man. With a colored man just half her age.

The attack being late in coming was proportionately severe. The Holidays feasted royally or partook of strange and weird concoctions as the course of Aunt Celia's love ran smooth or rough. The kitchen hereto-

fore silent, except for the subdued clatter of dishes or the dull tread of Aunt Celia's feet, now echoed to music. Aunt Celia sang. "I'se Waitin', Honey, Waitin, Long Fo' Yo' ", "Love, I Am Lonely", and when things were at their worst, "I Wants to Die, O Lawd, I Wants to Die."

Silas M. must have led a troublous life in those days what with revolt in the parlor and love and longing in the kitchen. He appealed to Miss Mitty Con and she remonstrated with Aunt Celia. She pointed out the unlikelihood of a young man falling in love with a woman old enough to be his mother. She tactfully referred to Aunt Celia's lack of beauty and hinted that it was her comfortable bank account which was attracting young Smith. Aunt Celia's name was Smith too, although the Holidays now learned it for the first time, and she regarded this amazing coincidence as a direct proof of the approval of Providence. She scorned Miss Mitty Con's warning; referred bitingly to old maids that couldn't tell love when it was shoved at 'em; and ended by inviting the family to her wedding at the South African Methodist church.

Miss Mitty Con grieved at the lack of wisdom displayed by her cook, but she grieved

still more at the prospect of losing that cook.

Young Smith had a job in Kansas City and directly after the ceremony he would bear his blushing bride thither. The little house at the foot of the hill would be closed and locked, as Aunt Celia refused to rent or sell it. Right here Lois had her inspiration. Both the Holidays and the Wade families were what Aunt Celia called "pizen proud." If the young folks—Lois and Tom—could flaunt their poverty in the face of the world it would bring their elders to the right-about in short order. What better method to achieve this than to set up housekeeping in Aunt Celia's immaculate home? Aunt Celia was to be married fashionably at noon. Tom and Lois would accomplish their ceremony early in the morning and the evening paper would announce the future habitation of the young Wades. They calculated they would spend that night and part of the next day in Aunt Celia's house. After that they would choose from the two comfortable homes—the Wades' and the Holidays'—flung hastily open to them. Or it might be that within an hour after Silas M.'s scandalized eyes had fallen upon the item he would be hurrying to the foot of the hill and imploring the newly-

weds to come home with him at once. And close upon his heels would come Wade senior. The fathers-in-law would thus be united in a common purpose and all the difficulties of the past would be wiped out at one stroke. It was a pretty plan—and it worked up to a certain point.

Tom and Lois were married—by the justice of the peace, mind you! at ten o'clock the morning of September ninth. Aunt Celia entered the bonds of holy matrimony and acquired a Mrs. before her name even if she didn't change that name, at high noon exactly. It was remarked afterwards that the dusky bride started nervously when the noon whistles sounded and later she confessed that she had remembered it was time to put the Holiday potatoes on to cook. So far, so good; both couples married, all four blissfully happy. Then things began to go wrong. Aunt Celia returned to her home to await her new husband's return from the bank where he had gone to withdraw her money for her. Since they were to live in Kansas City it was of course necessary that she take her money with her and it was for just such a lightening of her burdens as this, young Smith explained to his wife, that he had

married her. His broad shoulders would henceforth be interposed between Aunt Celia and a harsh world. Secretly Aunt Celia questioned both the broadness of the barrier and the harshness of the world but she gave him her order upon the bank and the new husband departed. Aunt Celia waited for him to come back. She waited all that afternoon and evening. She waited all that week and next. If she still lives, she is still waiting, for never did the faithless bridegroom return with Aunt Celia's savings. Her sympathetic friends hinted of death by accident or murder, but Aunt Celia was nobody's fool—that is, when she regained the senses love had previously taken from her. She saw the entire plot, but she was philosophic about it. She admitted it was a big price to pay for two hours' wedded happiness, but at least, she informed her friends, she could now write Mrs. before her name and it developed that this was something she had always longed to do. There was no fool like an old fool, she 'lowed, and now she'd take her little dose and say nothing.

The problem which now arose was what was to become of Lois and Tom, waiting like doleful Peris outside the gate of Aunt Celia's

paradise? Time was when Aunt Celia would have verbally castigated the young 'uns for their foolishness, but love and suffering had chastened that hard heart. She nobly offered to move into the little room at the Holidays', which Miss Mitty Con had so long urged upon her, and to allow the young Wades to carry out their previous plans.

So Tom and Lois moved into the little house, and cooked in the kitchen and sat in the sitting room and slept in the Death Chamber. And not only for a night and part of the next day. Neither old blankety blank Wade nor Silas M. paid the slightest attention to the young couple's strange honeymoon. Phyl made abortive attempts to reconcile her father to Lois. Silas was apparently deaf at such moments. Miss Mitty Con, shocked to the very roots of her curls, invaded her brother's office one morning with a similar appeal. She emerged very red-faced and indignant three minutes later. It began to look as though the young Wades would permanently occupy the Death Chamber.

At first it was all part of a glorious lark. Their friends visited them riotously in the tiny place. It became the fashion in the younger set to contribute to Lois' house-

keeping and never a day passed without Letty or Jane or Margaret or Dorothy tripping down the hill with a basket of goodies obtained from an approving mamma. Phyl smuggled Lois' clothes to her and a masculine friend of Tom's performed the same kind office for him. Tom kept up his law course and neither he nor his father referred to his marriage. Mrs. Wade was not constructed of such stern material and she came nearly every day to pet and weep over the exiles. Aunt Celia came, too, and she nearly wept at the desecration of her dying room. The first fine rapture of her sympathy was wearing off and any way she had a mighty poor opinion of Lois' housekeeping. She began to hint darkly at the wear and tear on the furniture caused by so many visitors; to mutter of the hardness of her bed in the Holiday home; to sigh over the presence of Lois' toilet articles on the hitherto funereal bareness of her dresser. It became increasingly evident to the young Wades that something again had to be done.

Tom screwed his courage to th' sticking point and went to his father with his troubles. Old Blankety Blank (Tom began to approve of this name for his sire) pointed out to him in terms of the most legal brevity and

clearness that having made his bed he must lie on it, even if it was Aunt Celia's dying bed. Then Lois wrote her father a touching little note wherein all references to redheads were omitted. This, too, drew a blank. Everything seemed utterly hopeless when Aunt Celia took a hand. She visited her home at an unfortunate moment. It was Sunday afternoon and Tom had been smoking. A spark of live ash had fallen from his pipe (adopted as the first step in economy) and alighted on the sacred, immaculate, unbelievably white counterpane of the death bed. Close on the heels of this tragedy Lois had caught her bracelet in the lace of the pillow sham and torn an inch long rent. Aunt Celia was speechless with horror. That is, she was speechless for almost a minute. After that Demosthenes himself had nothing on Aunt Celia. The young folks shriveled under the scorching fire of words which leaped about them.

They apologized for burning the counterpane; they apologized for tearing the lace; they apologized for having been married; they apologized for having been born; at last they apologized for there ever having been a world in which such heart-rending occur-

rences could take place. Aunt Celia talked steadily on throughout their apologies—they never knew whether she heard them or not. But at the conclusion of both addresses, theirs and hers, she uttered one pregnant sentence:

"I'se gwine mek Mr. Silas M. Holiday tek you-all home where you belong."

It speaks volumes for Lois' confidence in the ability of Aunt Celia to make good her promise that she began to pack, immediately the rightful house owner had left the room. Before another sun had set Tom and Lois were occupying the front bedroom of the Holiday house. Aunt Celia never revealed how she worked the miracle. But Miss Mitty Con and Phyllis still speak shudderingly of the meal which was served to them upon Aunt Celia's return from her own home; and it is a fact that Silas M. rifled his own pantry before he went to bed that night—a thing unprecedented in the history of that well fed family. Aunt Celia smiled grimly the next morning as she removed the traces of roast chicken, and custard pie which she had—intentionally?—placed in the ice chest before she left the kitchen. To go back to that meal and to the manner in which Aunt Celia

wrought the lawyer's change of heart—when the ladies had left the table and Silas M. sat trying to console himself with his after supper cigar, Aunt Celia revived an almost forgotten custom and **stalked.** Pausing opposite her employer she made a few remarks. Phyl heard her making them although she could not gather their exact import. A word now and then—"nur no turkey fixens fur the jedge"—"mek your own beat biscuits or go widout"—"cole light braid fur breakfus' place ob my cream waffles" gave a hint of the subject matter. It was effective.

It is true that Lois and Tom made a somewhat stormy entrance into the paternal home, but by the time Silas Thomas Wade put in his appearance, things had quieted down in all directions. The two grandfathers shook hands over the cradle.

"Got a face like a dried apple, hasn't he?" Wade Senior said admiringly.

"I'll take my Bible oath he's going to have red hair," Silas M. answered in tones of awe.

And both grandfathers said together,

"Bless the little scoundrel!"

The Little House of Devotion.

It isn't much to look at—the little house. Its windows are broken, its roof is leaking, its plaster crumbling. The front yard is overgrown with weeds, the once fertile garden in the rear a dreary waste. Only a few bushes which put forth bloom in the spring and a single apple tree with a curved seat beneath it, carry on the heritage of fragrance and beauty which once surrounded it. But it stands—the little house—a silent monument to the unselfish love and devotion of a woman for her son; and if thoughts are the powerful things some creeds maintain, then the atmosphere of the deserted rooms should be sweet with the perfume of sacrifice.

Here in this little four-room house some five or six miles from St. Joseph, a woman lived for twenty-one years, unseen by anyone except the half-witted colored maid who attended her, and one friend. A woman of beauty, charm and previous wealth. A woman

whose beautiful home was once a rendezvous for the city's most interesting people. A woman whose son, in the long lonely years she spent in the little house, rose to fame and fortune and never knew that his mother lived.

Several years before the Civil War the register of the Patee House showed the names of Mr. Elliot Stowell and wife. The name "wife" seemed almost too dignified and pretentious for the slip of a girl who had come from the East to found with her husband a home in what was then considered the wild West. After driving about the town until they had a fair idea of its possibilities and real estate values, Mr. Stowell bought several lots on a fair hill side and built his home. So magnificent was it that country people hearing of its wonders drove in on Sunday afternoons to gaze and comment. When the house was finished Mrs. Stowell set about furnishing it and being a woman of exquisite taste and judgment the results of her work were admirable. The hangings, furniture and table appointments came from New York; the fountain in the front yard was imported from Italy; the carved sideboard and

oaken table, it was rumored, were wedding presents from England.

When the last touch was given to their home, the Stowells had a housewarming. There was a tremendous amount of angling and wire pulling for invitations to this festivity. Everybody was eager to view the much talked of interior of the place which had teased their curiosity so long. Presumably it was like most gatherings of the kind; the feature which appeared to impress the guests most was the supper. Flavorings of which the town had never heard, salads the composition of which was a deep mystery to the uninitiated, ices frozen into strange and beautiful shapes—these were described at many breakfast tables the next morning, and the unfortunates who were obliged to visualize the occasion through the eyes of others Oh-ed and Ah-ed at the magnificence of it all.

For more than ten years after this triumphal entry into the town's select circles, the Stowells were active participants in every social event. Elliot Stowell grew dignified and rotund. Virginia, his wife, lost her slender girlishness and bloomed into beautiful womanhood. But she carried always a

wistful, unsatisfied look in her eyes, for life, so prodigal in all other ways, had denied her what she longed for most—a child. She mothered her friends' children, and the children who at her invitation played about the fascinating precincts of her yard. She even mothered her stout husband, nearly a decade older than she.

At last came a day in early autumn when Mr. Stowell went about with a face fairly radiating happiness. When the punch bowl stood brimful on a table in the front hall and "inquiring friends" drank a health to the tardy heir to the Stowell dollars. When the servants went about chuckling and poking one another, in their delight. When the pale mistress of the house lay smiling in her big English bed in the front chamber and could not speak for the happy tears that overflowed when the silk and linen wrapped bundle was placed in her arms.

From the hour of his birth Virginia Stowell's son held his mother's heart between his hands. Her husband existed for her only as joint owner of this wondrous being. Balls and parties knew her no more. The trim colored nurse, specially trained for baby tending, found that her work consisted in

looking on while Mrs. Stowell bathed and fed, rocked and sung to the marvelous baby. The first tooth was an event of national importance; and why the mayor didn't declare a holiday when Elliot Junior took his first step was a matter of indignant surprise to Elliot Junior's mother. Mr. Stowell was fond and proud of his boy; but he could not rise to the heights of almost fanatical love Virginia accorded her longed for treasure. Her friends shrugged amused shoulders and gradually learned to exclude her from their plans. One of them tells of a wedding which Mrs. Stowell, persuaded by the pleadings of the bride, attended. A cool breeze sprang up during the ceremony and the baby's mother hardly waited for the closing prayer before hurrying home to see that he was properly covered.

When Virginia's boy was five years old his father died. After this the mother centered her thoughts even more strongly upon her son. He had a private teacher at home; his mother could not endure his absence at school. The tutor must have often been hampered and embarrassed by the presence of his pupil's mother, for she was never long out of the school room. In the late after-

noon the two drove together and pedestrians smiled indulgently at the close attention the mother paid to the boy's every remark. It was a thousand wonders young Elliot did not become unendurably spoiled with all this deference. Perhaps the very extravagance of his mother's devotion was his salvation. Even as a tiny lad he had a saving sense of humor. He would roll his big brown eyes in loving mockery when some fresh burst of enthusiasm on his mother's part made him the object of everybody's notice.

They grew up good friends and comrades —these two. Mrs. Stowell was never so happy as when she had the big house filled to the last attic with friends of her son. She revived her hostess' abilities when he became old enough to enjoy entertainment. The young people flocked as irresistibly to her call as bees to a honeypot. In the summers Mrs. Stowell and Elliot went to a little eastern watering place and there she had her boy to herself. They fished and swam and tramped about the woods. They built tiny fires and cooked their picnic meals many miles from home. It was heaven on earth to Virginia Stowell and the memory of it lived with her to the day of her death.

Elliot went to college when he was nineteen. His mother resisted a frantic desire to establish herself in his college town for the period of his stay. She was beginning to realize that a young man can have too much of even the nicest mother's companionship and she stayed heroically at home. She even gave her consent to Elliot's joining a walking tour through Switzerland at the close of his college career. This was a favorite diversion of wealthy young America at that time and Mrs. Stowell rejoiced at his opportunity to join the select party which sailed from New York one bright June morning. She came to see him off; chatted brightly of the coming trip, planned the happy life they were to share when he came home, and at the last waved him goodby with a hand that did not tremble even though her heart seemed a stone in her breast. Perhaps some faint, formless intuition told her then that she was never to see her boy again.

Before Elliot had landed in England the Stowell fortune was swept away by an unfortunate eastern investment. Never a woman of business, Virginia had allowed the lawyer appointed by her husband to administer his estate with full control of the money.

Just what happened is not clear; but it soon became evident that outside of what the sale of the house would bring, Mrs. Stowell had not a penny to her name. She was stunned by the suddenness of the blow. When she came to a realization of what it meant her sorrow was all for Elliot, none for herself. It seemed unendurable to her that the boy should be deprived of his trip. If she could contrive to furnish him with enough money to last until he came home, then the two of them could start all over again. She had unbounded confidence in her boy's ability to succeed in whatever he undertook. He would come home and make a new fortune for them both and everything would be all right. But he must finish his journey first, unhampered by meager funds.

She put the house in the hands of agents and had no trouble getting a good price for it. The furnishings also brought a pretty sum. She banked the entire amount, moved into a cheap boarding house and settled herself to await patiently her son's return. Just before he was due she received a long, jubilant letter from him. Elliot had taken to himself a wife, an English girl who according to his enthusiastic description was

a combination of houri and angel. The boy was lightheaded with joy over his luck in winning her; was mad to show her to his mother; and wrote an entire sheet of rejoicing that they had money enough to start housekeeping at once in the way he would like. He added that he had had the offer of the management of the American branch of a big English manufactory and asked what his mother would think of selling the St. Joseph home and coming East, where his work would be, to live.

To say that Virginia spent anxious moments over this letter is to put is mildly. For three nights she paced the floor or tossed upon her bed trying to evolve some plan whereby a home for Elliot and his wife could be secured when he landed in America. It grew at last into a question of her own support. If in any way she could efface herself and her expenses from her son's life, enough would remain to give him a comfortable start both in his domestic and his business career. He would insist upon her comfort first. She knew him well enough to realize that he would never knowingly touch a penny of what should be kept for the support of her old age. If only she could disappear! Dur-

ing the black moments just before dawn this mother, every fibre of whose being ached with love and devotion toward her son, seriously considered taking her life in order that Elliot might reap the benefit of their common bank account. Distorted and unreasoning as was her point of view she yet retained enough reason to discard this course. Elliot must never be branded with the disgrace of his mother's suicide.

She wrote him a letter which was timed to meet him when he landed in New York. She expressed herself as delighted with the prospect of coming East to live, said a few tender words of welcome to the new daughter and at last explained to Elliot that some losses had occurred in their income but there was ample to establish the new home. She urged her son not to come to St. Joseph but to prepare for her to come to them in the East. She would wind up things with her lawyer and write again.

There was a dim, half formed idea in her mind when she packed her few belongings in a satchel and left the boarding house without telling anyone. She remembered a tiny house which her husband had acquired for a debt, and which was considered of so little

value that it had not even been listed in the possessions of the estate. She had furnished it long years ago with the overflow from her own home and Mr. Stowell established a convalescent protege of his there for the benefit of the country air. Since that time it had remained closed and unused. Here went Virginia for a few days to wrestle with the problem which obsessed her mind. She opened and aired the little house and hired a negro half-wit who lived within a mile of her to provide her with food. She had no thought then of making it a permanent home.

One morning the darkey brought a newspaper wrapped about some purchase and in it was an article telling of Mrs. Stowell's disappearance and the fears which were entertained for her safety. A woman's body had been seen floating down the river and a rumor was rife that an accident had happened to Elliot Stowell's widow. Virginia was quick to realize the opportunity open to her. Here was her chance to disappear. Outside of the negro maid no soul on earth knew of her whereabouts. She had a modest sum of money in her purse and much of her clothing in her bag. She could live quietly in the lit-

tle house, trusting that she would not outlive her means of support—and indeed her weakened heart gave her cause to believe that—or that the way would open later to her maintainance. She stocked the pantry a little at a time, sending the colored maid on the long journey afoot to town. This woman, Hannah, asked no questions, not even the name of her employer. She was stupidly obedient, stolidly docile.

The little house stood well away from the road and Mrs. Stowell's presence there attracted no attention. Instructed by her mistress Hannah answered any idle questions with the information that an invalid was living in the house and must not be disturbed. Virginia was careful not to appear outside in the day time and for years no one ever caught sight of her. She read of the fruitless search for her body; of the telegram that broke the sad news to her son; also of the illness which kept Elliot from making the journey his mother dreaded, back to his old home.

Toward the end of the second year Mrs. Stowell, in spite of the rigid economy she practiced and with the products of the garden Hannah tilled, found that her funds were

running low. She had some magnificent diamonds, relics of her former splendor. It was obvious that in them lay her means of future existence—equally obvious that no pawnbroker would give Hannah a fraction of their value. After long debate with herself Mrs. Stowell wrote to a former friend, a St. Joseph lawyer, and confided her deception to him. She explained why she had taken this extraordinary step, and entreated him to keep her secret and to realize what he could on the jewels. The letter brought him hurrying to her house, thoroughly determined to take her back with him to the city. He found her adamant in her purpose. She pointed out to him that all the pain her son had suffered, the grief she herself had endured would go for nothing should she reveal her whereabouts now. In the end she overcame his scruples and gained his promise to protect her confidence. He exacted one condition from her in return: he was to be allowed to visit her once every month to assure himself of her welfare and to give her what news there might be of her son. Secretly he hoped to gain his way in the end.

Year succeeded year in the little house of motherly devotion. Virginia's matronly out-

lines faded and she grew thin and stooped. The lawyer had brought her books and magazines and bit by bit some of the luxuries of former years. Her days were passed pleasantly enough with her reading, needlework and gardening. She tended her shrubs—the same shrubs which straggle wildly over the grass-grown paths today—and planted her sweetpeas and pansies, poppies and dahlias each spring. She made delicious preserves from the fruit of the cherry and peach trees which grew on her place. Many of these confections she trusted to her friend's care to be taken to the hospital and almshouses. Now and then an inquisitive wanderer or some one from a neighboring farm asked for admittance at the door. Hannah always attended to these callers and sent them away without a glimpse of the mysterious lady of the house.

News at first came but rarely from Elliot. He was established as manager of the manufacturing plant; he was doing well, was happy. When the news came of the birth of his baby daughter—the daughter named Virginia Stowell—his mother's yearning to clasp the tiny creature grew almost beyond bounds. And as the lawyer pointed out there was now

no reason why she not reveal herself to Elliot. He was prospering, amply able to afford her support. But the overpowering purpose which had actuated the mother so long had now become an obsession. It was in reality a mild form of insanity. She was firmly convinced that his welfare lay in her effacing herself from Elliot's life, and no argument of her friend could shake her determination to remain hidden. Only one fear rose to torment her. The lawyer was her senior by several years. If she outlived him there would be no way to communicate with the world from which she had set herself adrift. Her former acquaintances and friends had forgotten her except for the memory of her gracious presence and her wonderful devotion to her son. Her hair was snow white and her face wrinkled and seamed. It was probable that she could walk the streets of the city which had known her so many happy years, without recognition—but she knew that she would never make the attempt. Silence and solitude had grown necessary to her happiness; she shrank from breaking the trance-like spell.

One evening the lawyer brought great news. Her son and his wife and children had

arrived in St. Joseph the night before. Elliot Stowell was now a man of large affairs and was on his way to an important convention in California. He had stopped off for a few days to visit his childhood's home and to see his old friends. He had been to the lawyer's office that very day and his unhealed sorrow over his mother's sad death had driven her friend posthaste to make a fresh appeal. He pictured Elliot's delight at seeing his mother again; the joy which would be hers when she saw the lovely woman who was his wife, and the daughters and the son who were Virginia's grandchildren. He pleaded his cause as he had never done in the courtroom and at last succeeded in wringing a reluctant promise from Mrs. Stowell to consider the matter and to let him know her decision the next day.

There is no one to tell of the night that followed. Old Hannah said briefly that "Missie walk, walk, walk all night long." It is conceivable that the unalterable purpose which had controlled her mind so long could not be snapped without physical retribution. At any rate, Virginia never saw her son. The lawyer had interpreted her vague promise as seemed to him best and had laid the entire

story before Elliot, trusting to her son's dear presence to lift the cloud which had settled on her mind. But when the smart trap drew up before the gate of the little house and the two men alighted they were met by old Hannah. In a few broken words she told them of her mistress' passing; told of the heavy fall which had roused her at daybreak; of rushing to the bedroom where the weary steps had sounded all night.

Virginia lay face downward on the floor. One hand clasped a tiny kid shoe which had once covered a baby's dimpled foot. Her face was quite peaceful—even happy, when her son looked upon it after all these years. Hannah had laid her carefully upon her bed. With a rude sense of the fitness of her offering she had strewn the entire coverlet with the first violets and spring beauties. A simple white gown, lace trimmed, softened the angularities of age. It was thus Virginia Stowell welcomed her son. He had left her in the flush of his budding manhood. He came back to her in the ripeness of his maturer years. But the tears he shed in the little house were the hot stinging tears of that first young sorrow. He had found his mother only to lose her again.

The little house of devotion has stood empty for many a year. When Virginia left it for her last resting place in Mount Mora her son closed it and locked the door. Afterwards he gave it rent free to a struggling young farmer. It was used from time to time for such as needed a place of sojourn in country quiet. But now it has fallen into disuse. No hands tend the bushes or gather the fruit from the trees. Mischievous boys have dismantled it of everything portable. Four walls and a roof—a weed-grown garden and dying trees—these are all that is left of the little temple of a mother's love and sacrifice—all that remains of the little house of devotion.

His Own Rooftree.

An uncourteous world may dub one a tramp, but it does not therefore follow that one is fond of walking. Bill hated it. True, he belonged to what municipal governments label the "transient population" of a good many cities, but there are other ways of progressing than by the long continued use of one's feet. Therefore Bill regarded with lively disfavor the strip of woods in which he now found himself. There was nothing to indicate that any human habitation existed within miles of him. Clearly if he wished to regain the society of his fellow men he must walk.

How Bill, child of the pavements and the electric lights, found himself with nothing but moss and fallen leaves underfoot and a star-sprinkled sky overhead, is not as strange as it would first appear. It began with a little disagreement with an ill-mannered brakeman over the trivial matter of a ticket.

Bill took the view that tickets were bits of wholly unnecessary red tape when it came to a seat in a freight car, and he said so quite without rancor. On the other hand, the brakeman was just as firm in his conviction that a passenger was a passenger in whatever part of the train he rode, and was therefore required to produce a ticket; and he said so, only not without rancor. In the end the brakeman took a most unsportsmanlike advantage and summoned a fellow brakeman to his assistance. Between them with a lack of gentleness and consideration for Bill's feelings which his mother—providing Bill still possessed a mother—could but deprecate, they helped Bill from the moving train onto the roadside and were not at all concerned with the fact that Bill alighted very painfully upon a pile of stones.

As has been said before, Bill hated to walk. But the time was early April, the place a dusky wood and the man a stranger, unfed and bruised. It behooved him to push forward as rapidly as possible. It did not appear to matter which direction he took. There were woods everywhere. So he set forth in the way he happened to be facing

when he picked himself up and began to walk.

He walked five miles, ten miles, a hundred miles according to his calculations. He disproved for all time the theory that the earth is round, for he would long ago have arrived at his starting point had that fact been true. His feet stumbled and his body ached with weariness. His mind turned longingly to the cozy freight car from which he had been ejected and backward to the various holes and corners which had constituted his bed chambers in the last city of which he had been an unbidden guest.

He had nearly reached the point of casting himself recklessly upon the ground to freeze and die, as he was convinced that he would do, when the dense wood parted to show a little clearing in the center of which stood a small house. He crept warily toward it, mindful of unchained and vicious dogs. A few minutes' inspection showed him that the place was empty. Indeed the front door sagged upon its hinges and revealed the interior in all its staring vacancy. Bill stumbled in and looked about him. A small fireplace yawned at one side of the room and near it lay the pieces of an old chair. Bill

had matches. In a few minutes a small fire was roaring up the chimney and Bill sat blissfully absorbing its heat. When he was warmed through he doubled his hat for a pillow and sank into the profound sleep which was the result of his long walk.

When he awoke the spring sunshine was streaming in at the dusty windows. A meadow lark was calling and trilling to its mate. Softened by distance a hen was announcing proudly the gift of an egg to an appreciative world.

Bill sat up and rubbed his stiff legs. He was tired and sore all over and more than that he was ravenously hungry. He investigated the contents of the newspaper-wrapped package in the pocket of his coat. One bit of stale bread and butter, one piece of bologna. That was all. Bill disposed of them at a gulp and wondered hungrily where he could get more. And he was thirsty. A few minutes' reflection convinced him that if he expected to find either food or water he must get up and look for it. First he went through the house. It contained two rooms, a front and a back. In the latter was a built-in cupboard and on its shelves an old tin coffee pot, an iron skillet and a few

pieces of broken or cracked china. There was also a small table in fairly good condition.

He opened the back door and looked out. A small garden tract, untended for several years, lay directly against the house. There was a small orchard with buds swelling on the trees, a shed, a well and—woods. Bill shuddered. He had a lively horror of woods, born of his night's experience. On all four sides they enclosed the little clearing and Bill felt trapped. Then he remembered the cackling hen. Where there were hens there must also be people. A closer scanning of the horizon revealed a distant curl of smoke. Bill went down to the shed to investigate the steady cut-cut-ca-da-cut which proceeded from it. Several frightened hens flew down from the high nests. There were eggs in the nest, some of them fresh, he was sure. Bill grinned with pleasure. Here was real food. He reasoned that the hens had probably strayed from home, "stolen their nests," in fact.

Bill filled his hat with eggs and went back to the house. He got water in the tin coffee pot at the well and picked up enough wood to build a fire. When the water boiled he

cooked his eggs, but without salt they were not very palatable. Still he ate them and sat still to think out his next move. He must get to the nearest town. But how? Walk? Bill rubbed his sore legs and considered that he had had enough walking to last him the rest of his life. Still he couldn't stay here and starve.

He decided in the end to set out in the direction of the smoke, in the hope that he would come upon a house. There he would obtain not only food but information and perhaps a lift to the nearest city. Ten minutes' walk through the woods brought him in sight of a large farmhouse, standing prosperously in the midst of well-tilled fields and extensive orchards. He skirted the barns on his way to the back door and so came upon the master of the farm emerging from the stable.

"Hello! A tramp, eh? Well, we don't get many of your kind in this neck of the woods. What do you want—something to eat?"

Bill nodded, a little sheepishly. Somehow he felt it a bit difficult to reel off his usual hard luck story in the presence of this kindly faced man.

"Willing to work for it, I suppose?" A quizzical twinkle shone in the farmer's eyes.

"Yes," said Bill greatly to his own astonishment, "I am."

"Then you're the man we're looking for," was the prompt reply. "We're mighty short-handed now and right in the planting season, too. I can use you as long as you'll stay. A dollar a day and your board. How does that suit you?"

Bill ventured a few cautious questions on his own account before agreeing to the proposition.

"How far is it to the nearest town?"

"Weston? Fifteen miles."

"U'm. Anybody going—driving that way soon?"

"Couldn't say. This is a busy time with us, as I said before. In a week or so I guess some one'll be going in. Now how about it? Want to work?"

"I'll work today," Bill told him. "I'm kind of lamed up and want to rest. Can I take my pay in food? I'm—camping a piece from here and need supplies."

"All right," the farmer said briskly. "Come along with me and I'll show you where to

begin. The women folks will fix you up a basket tonight."

It was a long-to-be-remembered day for Bill. His muscles were still sore from the unaccustomed strain on them of the previous day and before noon they were aching violently. The hearty, well cooked dinner rested him somewhat and he went back to the field with a more willing spirit. But when the men followed their tired horses into the barnyard at night Bill was too utterly weary to care what became of him then or at any time. The white-haired mistress of the farmhouse insisted upon his sharing the men's supper before he departed; and when he finally set out for the little cabin she placed in his hands a well filled basket containing bacon, coffee, bread, butter and a big bottle of new milk. He remembered to ask for salt and she supplied not only that but some sugar as well. Then with a kindly glance at his tattered clothing she bade him wait while one of the girls brought a pair of old blankets.

"If you're camping out, you'll be glad of them before morning. These spring nights are pretty sharp."

Bill had an odd sense of homecoming as

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he opened the door of the little house. He collected more wood from under the trees and kindled his fire. The blanket was a boon of comfort and he drifted off to sleep with the drowsy cheep-cheep of a nearby bird for a lullaby.

The next day and the next he loafed about the place, cooking his meals at the fireplace and prowling about the garden. He found some tender asparagus shoots, survivors of a one time flourishing bed. Bill had never tasted anything so delicious as that asparagus, gathered by his own hands from what he had begun to think of as his garden. The spicy odors of fresh growing things, the smell of the earth itself in the warm sunshine, were beginning to stir a long dormant instinct within him. His forebears for generations were farmers and the call of the soil was sounding in his ears.

The third day it rained and the water descended into the house in a steady stream from a hole in the roof. In the afternoon the skies cleared and Bill climbed up to fix the roof, armed with some rusty nails, some light boards and a rock to be used as a hammer. If Bill had but known it this simple act marked a turning point in his life. He

went up on the roof a hobo, with the tramp instinct to make snug his temporary shelter. He came down a householder with the proprietory desire to repair and preserve his domain.

The day after he went back to work at the farm and stayed there nearly a week. On Friday evening the farmer said to him kindly, "Bill, the boys are going to drive into town tomorrow for some seeds and other things. Want to go along? I suppose that means goodby, for I know you're hankering for the city again. I'm sorry, too. I believe you've got the making of a real farmer in you. Ever try it before?"

"A little—when I was a kid," Bill answered briefly. "Stayed on a farm till I got too smart for it, you know."

"Yes, I know," Mr. Atkins said with sudden gravity. "We've got 'em the same way here and most of 'em come to about your pass. There used to be a likely young fellow lived just east of here. Had a little house and a nice wife. His father gave him fifty acres and built the house. But young George got the city fever and off he went."

"What became of him?" Bill asked with interest.

"Well, he's doing pretty well now, thanks to his wife. She was the kind that stood right by him through thick and thin and she encouraged him and spurred him on until he's making good in a hardware office. The hours are longer and harder than any he ever put in here and I don't believe he makes much more of a living, but he's satisfied, so I guess no one else need say anything."

"And the farm? What became of it?"

"His father put it into cultivation again, all except the couple of acres that used to be the garden around the house. That and the house are unused. I doubt if they'll ever be occupied again, at least in the father's lifetime."

Bill drew a long breath.

"I'm going into town, Mr. Atkins, but I'm coming back. I'm going in after some things I need, but I'd like to work for you part of each week if you'll have me. I need a couple of days off for—for my own work."

Mr. Atkins said no more on the subject. His years had given him wisdom and he recognized that some subtle change was taking place in the man before him. But on Sunday he sought out his wife where she

sat on the side porch and laid a problem before her.

"May, you know that tramp that's been working here off and on for the last two weeks?"

"Yes, Henry. I've been intending to ask you about him. He said he is camping out and I'm sure he isn't looking after himself properly. It's too early in the season to be camping."

"Don't let that worry you," he told her dryly. "He's got a roof over his head and a fire to cook his meals by."

"But where, Henry? There are no houses within ten miles except—"

"Except George's. That's where he is. Been living there ever since the first day he showed up here. I took a walk over there yesterday while he was in town and he's fixed up the place quite a bit. Mended the roof and got the door back on its hinges and picked up the brush around the yard. And the boys tell me he spent his money in town for seeds and tools; got a hoe and a rake and a spade, and so on. Looks like he's planning on spending the summer there. Shall I put him out?"

"Oh, no, dear," Mrs. Atkins said softly.

"If he wants a house that bad let him have it. Besides I'd like to see the place occupied again. I've hated to think of it so empty and forlorn."

"I, too," the farmer said with a shade of sadness in his voice. "I'll let him alone for the summer. He'll probably tire of it in a few weeks anyway and move on. That kind never sticks very long anywhere."

The days rolled by lengthening into months. The fields showed green, then golden, then brown. Contrary to the farmer's expectations, Bill stayed, though he made occasional trips to town. He had long ago exchanged his ragged clothes for neat overalls and a blue shirt, and his pasty features had become hardened and brown by the sun. On a day near the end of August the young fellow sought out Mr. Atkins and requested an interview.

"I'd like you to take a walk with me, if you don't mind," he said. "I want to show you where I've been living this summer."

The two followed the well-defined path Bill's feet had worn through the woods until they came in sight of the little house in the clearing. Mr. Atkins paused in astonishment. The garden had been transformed

into a thriving, well kept place, where summer vegetables were in their prime. Potatoes were maturing in their hills, corn was ripening on the stalks. A tiny chicken yard had been fenced off and within strutted plump fries and motherly hens. The house, though still in need of paint, presented a trim, orderly appearance which it had not worn for many a year.

"You see," Bill explained, "I stumbled on this place last spring when I was trying to get back to town. I didn't intend to stay here longer than I needed to get money to pay my fare to St. Louis. But something, I can't tell you just what, kept me here, working and fiddling about the place. Now I want to buy it if you'll tell me who the owner is. I've saved fifty dollars for the first payment, and I'm going to save that much more by spring. I can do as I've been doing—work for you five days out of the week and tend to my garden the rest of the time."

Mr. Atkins stood tugging at his short beard, his eyes with their kindly gleam, searching the face of his employe.

"But why, boy? What's your motive in all this hard work? It's not much of a place

and there's not land enough to yield you a living. Why not hire out to me right through and save until you've got enough to buy a place worth while?"

Bill looked down at the ground while a slow red burned in his brown cheeks.

"It's because—I guess it's because it's home to me, sir," he said at last. "It's my house and my land. Some day maybe I'll outgrow it and want something bigger, but right now it's the finest place on earth to me. I want to own it in the eyes of the law as well as my own. Will you tell me who the owner is?"

"I am," said Mr. Atkins.

"You? And the man who left it—George—"

"Is my son. Yes, boy, you shall buy it. I don't believe George will ever come back to it. I'd give every acre I possess—but I won't go into that. His mother and I are glad to have the place occupied and by some one who is giving it the care you are. I won't give it to you, because I think it'll mean more to you if you earn it. But you may have it for one hundred dollars. Considering the improvements you've put on it, that's a fair price. And when you get ready to

branch out, I'll see about selling you the fifty acres that went with it originally. Goodby, boy. It does me good to find a man wanting and working for a home like this."

Bill, late hobo and parasite, now a landowner in his own right, stood for a moment regarding his dwelling place. His eyes lingered on the apple trees gleaming with red and yellow fruit; on the scarlet globes of the tomatoes hanging from their trellised vines; on the new strawberry bed, set out this month and carefully tended; and last of all, on the little house itself. Smoke curled cozily from the chimney. Every window sparkled and shone. The doorstep was swept clean. Over the little porch a trumpet vine climbed, swinging its gaudy blossoms in the wind.

Small and insignificant and isolated it might be, yet it held that without which the stateliest palace becomes an empty pile of stone—the spirit of home.

Little Lost Love.

Little lost love, the dark night is falling,
Shadows are long on the lea—
Always in fancy I hear your voice calling,
Calling, O Monette, to me.

Why did you leave me, so silently stealing
Out through the gloom of the night?
Could you not wait for the sunshine's revealing,
Wait for the morning and light?

Little lost love, my tired feet are stumbling,
Seeking the way that you went—
All the strong props of my man's life are crumbling,
All my old courage is spent.

Little lost love, the dark night is falling,
Shadows are long on the lea—
Little lost love, I am calling you—calling—
Little lost love, back to me.

Automobilists driving along Missouri's great highway, if they make a short detour from the road, may see an old brick chimney, sole remnant of what was once a southern home of the best type, standing beneath a huge, sheltering oak. The story connected with this chimney is pathetic enough to move the hardest heart and to bring tears to eyes ill-accustomed to weeping. It is the story of a man's hopeless love for a woman—the oldest, saddest theme on earth.

In the Wolcott family there were three young men and only one daughter—Monette Wolcott, the gayest, prettiest, most popular girl in the township. The big brothers and an adoring father and mother did their utmost to spoil her, but the girl's own wholesome nature kept her sweet as one of the pink clover blossoms which grew in the meadows of the Wolcott farm. She grew up among her brothers and their friends, queening it royally over her admirers, but not too dignified to indulge in an occasional romp when occasion arose. She was swinging in the grapevine when Col. Beauport first saw her. The young officer, not three years out of West Point, was visiting relatives in the nearby city. A drive to the Wolcotts to dine

and spend the day was included in the program of his entertainment. When the formal greetings at the house were over the young colonel was sent in Scott Wolcott's charge to find the young lady of the family. She was easily discovered by means of the rippling laugh which issued from a dense growth of vines and trees. Pushing their way through, the two young men paused to enjoy the pretty picture before them. A curly haired child, all flying sashbands, ruffled pantalettes and dimples, was clinging to the tough grapevine which stretched its length from one oak tree to another. A teasing boy at each end of the vine jerked it about, making its shrieking occupant experience the sensations of one who mounts a camel for the first time. Monette was not more than eight years old then, but afterwards Beauport confessed that she made an impression upon his mind which was never to be effaced.

The young colonel lingered in the neighborhood of the Wolcotts until the expiration of his leave and before he went he had won Monette's heart. She sat on his lap and played with the brass buttons of his uniform while he told her of the tame squirrels which

frisked about the military academy of his boyhood. All the family liked the officer, but it was conceded that he was Monette's special property. A year later he was stationed at one of the Indian reservations in Kansas and he paid frequent visits to the Wolcott home.

Monette was eighteen years old when the Civil war broke out. From the very beginning she was the fiercest of little rebels, wearing the forbidden colors in the face of the authorities and hoisting the stars and bars until General Halleck's order, issued in January, 1862, made it a menace to her own and her family's safety to do so any longer. At the first call for volunteers for the army of the South the three Wolcott boys enlisted. Mr. Wolcott longed to do likewise but the unrest of the surrounding country made him feel that his first duty lay to his wife and daughter and he stayed at home to protect them. Jack Schuyler aided him enthusiastically in this matter. Jack Schuyler? He was a young Virginia captain, attached to Price's army and detailed to scouting and recruiting duty in Cass, Jackson and Bates counties. He became acquainted with the Wolcotts at an early hour of his stay; was

doubly welcomed because of his family who were distant relatives of Mrs. Wolcott, and because of his affiliation with the southern army. He followed the example so many Missouri boys before him had set and promptly fell in love with Monette. And she —strange to say, she who had resisted the wooing of Joseph Merril of Independence, and of Will Jackson, nephew of the Jackson who gave his name to the famous camp— "Old Claib," as he was known affectionately to the South and contemptuously to the North—and of more equally eligible if not quite so prominent young men than she could count on all ten of her pretty fingers—she, Monette Wolcott, of the hard heart and alluring manner, fell just as promptly in love with Jack Schuyler.

It was June when he told her of his love— a Missouri June on a moonlight night. The last of the roses were sending fragrant messages from the garden. A little south breeze was the message bearer and it bore as well suggestions from the honeysuckle over the summer house, from the tall white lilies by the wall and from the big yellow moon itself, one might believe from the considerate way it pulled a fleecy cloud over its face just

at the critical moment. When the moon looked out again Monette's bright hair shone gold against the gray of Jack's uniform and two white arms which certainly did not belong to the captain—at least not then—were around his neck.

Mrs. Wolcott laughed and cried over them when they came for her blessing. Mr. Wolcott coughed a good deal, cleared his throat with quite unnecessary violence and shook Schuyler's hand until it ached. It was the brightest moment the parents had known since their three boys marched away. The happy young soldier clamored for an early wedding. He pointed out that his stay in Missouri was precarious as orders were expected at any time for him to join the forces in the South. Monette's father, though he grieved at the idea of parting with the last child left in the home, seconded Jack's plea. Monette could remain at home until Jack's orders came, then she could go South to visit her husband's people. It was Mrs. Wolcott who resisted the lover's arguments. Monette was so young—only nineteen. If anything were to happen to Jack—and that possibility was always to be faced—Monette would be left a widow before she was fairly out of her

girlhood. As a last argument she advanced her own failing health. She needed her daughter with her in these cruel days of war. Later when her sons were home she would give Monette the prettiest wedding any Missouri girl ever had. In the end she prevailed and the lovers could only solace themselves with the thought that as yet Captain Schuyler's orders had not arrived and he might spend the entire summer in that region. The war, of course, would be ended by fall and the Confederate flag flying gaily over the sovereign state of Missouri.

Jack's orders came two weeks after their engagement. A fortnight of happiness—that was all they had—but what a fortnight it was! The parents seeing their glorified faces sighed with a hint of sadness for the happiness of their own courtship. Just at dusk every night Jack's whistle sounded from the garden—the whipperwill's call, so nicely imitated that more than once the bird answered from the nearby wood. Then Monette would slip out, her white dress flashing through the shadows of the big oaks, and come to rest in a pair of arms waiting gladly for her at the gate. How much they found to say to each other—these two! What

ecstatic plans for the future, when they should be settled in their own little nest with no shadow of imminent parting to mar their bliss. Monette's big eyes shone and her cheeks rosed with happy color as she confided to her lover her ideas of architecture and interior decoration and home making in general. Of course her own home was perfect and her mother's taste faultless, but still—there was that old mahogany furniture for instance. When she had her house—our house—she was going to have the new carved walnut—didn't Jack think that it was much handsomer? Jack assuredly did think so, and he thought whatever else Monette desired him to think. It was all perfect—the garden, the June night and Monette. The young captain closed his eyes and told himself it was a dream from which he would presently awake.

And he did, poor boy! Before the fortnight had quite passed Schuyler was ordered to Georgia and had but twenty-four hours to make his preparations for departure. These consisted chiefly in holding a sobbing girl in his arms and telling her over and over that he would be careful, he would come back to her, she was not to worry, nothing could

harm him now that he was armed with her love. At the last as they stood in the shadow of the big oak down by the garden gate, Monette raised a white little face to his and drew his head down to a level with her eyes.

"Jack, whatever happens in the future—whether you live or whether you die—I shall never stop loving you. I'll be true to you all my life even if I live alone till I'm an old, old lady. Will you believe that, Jack dear?"

How could he help believing it with her blue eyes looking so earnestly into his, her lips framing the precious words? He swallowed the big lump which rose in his throat despite his best efforts, and kissed her again. Somehow he tore himself away and left his sweetheart to eat her heart out with longing for him in the bitter days to come.

In 1863 came the issuance of the famous Order No. 11, and as the Wolcotts were confessedly disloyal, they fled to friends in St. Louis, there to remain until it was once more safe to return to their home. Tragedy descended upon the family with a heavy hand which was not lifted for two long years. First came the news of the deaths of the two older Wolcott boys. Under this blow the mother drooped and pined and when shortly after

came the tidings of Scott Wolcott's death, she turned her face to the wall and left a world which had wounded her so cruelly. Monette and her father clung more closely together after her passing. Monette watched with terrified eyes the rapid encroach of age upon Mr. Wolcott and devoted all her loving energy to making the time drag less heavily on his hands. Her one bright spot in the darkness enveloping them was the hope of Jack's return. He had come brilliantly through so many hairbreadth escapes. Had been captured and escaped; had been wounded and recovered. Monette grew to believe him invulnerable even as he had predicted the night of their parting.

As though fate had determined to strip her of the last tie which bound her to her family, one day Mr. Wolcott was summoned before the federal authorities and accused of giving aid and sustenance to the enemy. His well known rebel principles, the fact that all of his sons had served in the army of the South, served to prejudice his judges against him and it would have undoubtedly resulted in his internment in a local prison had not aid come to him unexpectedly in the form of Beauport, now a general in the United States

army. His intervention gave Mr. Wolcott his freedom and the resentment which Monette felt at sight of the hated blue uniform was swept away in her gratitude to her father's deliverer. General Beauport was much with the Wolcotts for a few weeks. He explained to Monette that her father was still under close surveillance and the presence of a Union officer of the general's rank tended to avert suspicion from his. It was not long before Monette regained her old childish trust and admiration for him. It was good to lean on his strength, to lay on his broad shoulders burdens which had weighed down her own slender ones so long. For his part, General Beauport, unaware of Monette's engagement to the Confederate officer, gave rein to the love which had filled him at the first sight of his little girl sweetheart. He was a silent, rather grave man. Monette suspected nothing of the emotion which shook him when she confided her difficulties so trustingly to him.

There came a morning when Mr. Wolcott did not answer Monette's knock at his door. When her frantic efforts to awaken him had no effect and the girl knew, even while she called his name in piteous tones, that she

was now all alone in the world. The blow stunned her utterly for a while. She allowed General Beauport to make all the necessary arrangements, resting unconsciously in his wisdom and strength. After her father's funeral it became an established custom for the general to call each evening his military duties permitted, and take her for a stroll through the quieter streets of the city. Monette came to look forward to those walks. She confided her financial plans to him. She told him of the last beautiful years upon the Wolcott farm before the war had taken from her her big, adoring brothers, her sweet mother, and her kindly, loving father. Little by little she grew to know peace and a certain comfort in the silent sympathy the older man offered. That she told him nothing of Jack Schuyler and her engagement was due to a depth of shyness and reserve unacknowledged even to herself.

And then came the day when the world ceased for Monette Wolcott—when a black bordered letter from Mrs. Schuyler told of her son's death in battle. For long hours the girl lay unconscious. When she once more took up the dreary burden of living she was listless, apathetic, utterly indifferent to

what went on about her. Nothing interested her, not even the coming of peace. She acquiesced dully in General Beauport's plans for her. By this time, of course, he knew of her love for Jack Schuyler and his own heart was aching with its shattered hopes. He cared for her as tenderly as he had done when he thought her heart whole. The Wolcott farm was put on the market by the family lawyer and General Beauport bought it unknown to Monette. Some friends of the family living close to the old home urged her to come to them for a long visit, and the girl, caring little how she lived or where, consented.

During the half year she stayed at the Grahams she never entered the gates of her old home. She went quietly about her friends' grounds, touchingly grateful for their kindness and sympathy, but with a certain aloofness of manner which forbade questioning. Her hosts became seriously concerned for her mental health and wrote to General Beauport. He came at once to see her. Monette was in the cool, old fashioned parlor when he arrived. She gave him both hands, the first smile her lips had known for months appearing to welcome him.

He talked to her in the same brotherly, protective manner she had so liked before, and gradually she broke through the icy barrier which had enclosed her so long and wept hot tears in the kindly shelter of his arms. Later he had a long talk with her. It appeared that the Grahams were going to leave Missouri. They had sold their home and were to join relatives in California. What was to become of Monette? They urged her to join them in the new venture, but this the girl, knowing the extra expense and trouble her presence would entail on the long, difficult journey, refused to do.

It was then that the general asked her gently to allow him the privilege of giving her the shelter of his name. This was the formal, old-fashioned manner in which he worded his proposal of marriage. Intuitively he knew that anything approaching love-making would shock the girl unspeakably. He said nothing of his own feelings beyond telling her that she was as dear to him as the little sister he had lost in his boyhood. He pointed out the advantage it would be to her to have a husband to look after her welfare, and told her of his purchase of her old home. He asked nothing, exacted no

conditions of any kind. In the end she consented, telling him frankly that her heart was buried with her southern lover and she could give him nothing but wifely obedience and affection.

They were married in the early spring and went at once to live in Monette's girlhood home. For a time it seemed as though a measure of her lost happiness was to be restored. She went about her household duties with the first sign of interest she had shown since she left St. Louis. The general was a perfect husband, tender, devoted, undemonstrative. Monette never dreamed of the strong love which consumed him even while he exhibited only a brotherly affection for her. He realized that patience and repression were his only weapons. He would not believe that a love like his could do aught but prevail in the end.

Spring lingered late that year. The summer birds were long in coming to the old Wolcott garden. One evening toward the end of June the general and his young wife sat on the wide veranda silently drinking in the beauty of the moonlight night. The same perfumed breaths came from the lilies and the roses; the same little breeze stirred

the honeysuckle over the porch. Monette sighed and moved uneasily. She was fighting against memories which she had resolved never to harbor. Her husband's hand stole toward hers and she forced herself to make no movement. And then suddenly, clear and sweet from the oak tree by the gate came the old, heart breaking call:

"Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!"

Monette's lips went white with pain. She sat rigid in her chair, the moonlight glinting in her wide eyes.

"Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!"

General Beauport leaned forward solicitously.

"Dear child, what is it? Did the bird startle you?"

As though his words released her from the chains that bound her, Monette sprang wildly to her feet. For a single instant she stood there with the poise of a frightened doe, and then with one tearing cry of "Jack! Jack!" she was off and away.

The general's slower feet followed. He saw her flash through the gate, out upon the highway and disappear in the denser

woods across the way. Believing that she wanted to be alone for a time and that she would resent his intrusion, the chivalrous gentleman returned to the veranda and waited. When she had not returned by midnight he went in search of her. Morning found her still away and he sent the servants far and wide in an effort to discover her.

Monette was never found. For a week the neighbors joined in an organized search for the young wife. Dogs were brought from St. Louis and put on her trail. It ceased near the old grapevine swing and could not be picked up again. Detectives in every city for miles around were employed on the search. Newspapers contained offers of reward for any news of her, handbills were circulated throughout the state, but the general's young wife was never seen again. It was commonly believed that she had thrown herself into the river, but her body was not found, nor were there traces of her in the many miles of shore examined by the searchers.

Long after the hunt was abandoned by the community Monette's husband continued the search. He could not rid himself of the idea that somewhere she was waiting for

him, needing his comforting care. He haunted the woods, calling and listening for her call. At last, prematurely aged and broken, he closed the house and went to St. Louis, where he became active in political affairs. He lived there twenty-two years, a kindly, simple man, with a melancholy gentleness he never lost. During that time the Wolcott house was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Only the old chimney was left of its former grandeur. The garden grew into a smother of weeds. The oak tree by the gate sheltered many generations of whippoorwills. The roses and lilies sent out their perfume unheeded, until the long, untended summers dried them up.

One day there came a feeble, white haired old man who took lodging with the occupants of the old Graham house—newcomers to the country. He remained there the four years before he died. When the first whippoorwill sounded its plaintive call, the old man reached for his cane and made his halting way to the chimney of his former home. Here he would sit for hours in the moonlight, now and then rising to stumble through the garden, calling the name of his wife. Lonely passersby on

the highroad shivered at the sound of that piteous call:

"Monette! Oh-h, Monette!"

The voice ceased many years ago. The old general has gone to find his lost love, and only the whippoorwills break the silence of the old garden.

A Black Sheep.

This is the story of a black sheep and of the girl who believed in him. There is no doubt of his blackness—it was a good, durable color applied before the days of post-war dyes, and it took a heart-breaking amount of bleaching to affect it even in the slightest degree.

Wallace Maule was the only son of Parker Maule and Letitia, his wife. Parker Maule came from Virginia and from all accounts his past was illuminated by a crimson glow. Letitia was one of those gentle, placid women who believe that "men must have their little dissipations, my deah, and it doesn't do for ladies to inquire too closely into them." Which was a most agreeable theory to her husband and was in due time equally appreciated by her son. Wallace was early initiated into the delights of the cup that cheers, and that by his own father. A gentleman, according to Maule, was a man who could

take his drink without showing the effects of it. To teach his son this difficult art appeared to him the sum and substance of his paternal duty, and it must be said for him that he performed it thoroughly and cheerfully. By the time the boy was eighteen he had established a reputation for carrying the most liquor with the least apparent effect of any young buck in Missouri.

Parker Maule viewed the work of his hands complacently. Letitia sighed resignedly when her intimates referred delicately to the subject. But one generation begins where another leaves off and Wallace found the limits of his father's education in conviviality far too restricted for his taste. It wasn't long before wild tales of gambling bouts, broken glassware and furniture, threatened damage suits for destruction of property and the like began to harass the ears of Mr. Maule and set him to protesting vigorously to his son. But he found, as others have found before him, that it is sometimes far easier to plant the seed than it is to check the growth.

Wallace's weeds of dissipation grew apace —grew until they became too vigorous even for his own destroying. Those of you who

remember the subject of this little story know that this dusky sheep was an extraordinarily handsome one. His father's dashing vivacity combined with his mother's magnetic charm to form a personality irresistible to women. It is harrowing to contemplate the girlish tears shed for and because of Wallace Maule. He had a way of bending devotedly above his dance partner, or the companion of his walks and drives, which convinced her, temporarily at least, that she and she only could save him from himself. And she—Mildred, or Helen, or Leta—whoever it chanced to be—yearned and mourned over the black sheep in the firm conviction that he was more sinned against than sinning. Wallace was not insincere. He was simply an artist in emotions and for the time being he experienced all the feeling that his manner indicated. The trouble was that the emotion was all too evanescent—it vanished overnight and left the troubled inspirer of it all wondering bewilderedly what had happened.

From the time he was eighteen until he had reached the ripe age of twenty-two, Wallace led a life in which monotony had no part. It was just one series of scrapes—of the

heart and otherwise—after another and at last even his father's large tolerance became exhausted. A little New Year's celebration, the sum total of which ran well over three figures, coupled with some hysterical feminine letters which arrived by messenger, by the aid of neighborhood children, or were even pushed under the door in the darkness of the night, letters which reproached the son of the house so violently that Wallace took them in despair to his father—these things brought Mr. Maule to a state of mind where he determined once for all to teach his son a much needed lesson. So he ordered Wallace's clothes packed, gave him five hundred dollars and told him to leave the house, not to return until he had converted that five hundred into a thousand. His reasoning was something along this line: to double his capital Wallace would have to work; he couldn't work if he drank too much; therefore he would stop his drinking and go to work.

There was nothing wrong with the theory, but, unfortunately, Mr. Maule did not take into consideration Wallace's flirtation with the Goddess of Luck. Before a week was over the son of the house was back again,

his pockets bulging with greenbacks. The fall races were just over and enough money changed hands in the early seventies when not only Missouri contributed thoroughbreds to the races but Virginia, Georgia and Kentucky as well, to make or break a cityful of young men. Wallace bet and bet again and won each time. And returned to his father's house. And went right back to drinking again. (With apologies to O. O. McIntyre for the style.) Maule Senior had not a leg to stand on. His condition was more than fulfilled. He set himself to considering the problem more seriously than ever before and drew from the experience of his own youth a weapon which had greatly availed. He imported something else from the south beside the thoroughbred horses which filled his stables—a Kentucky girl, a distant connection of Mrs. Maule.

Cecily Carruthers! The old papers are filled with colorful descriptions of this southern belle. Filled also with accounts of the festivities given in her honor. Society outdid itself in her honor. Miss Carruthers could have dined half a dozen times a day had she so desired; could have taken her pick of partners for every dance on the program of the

balls arranged for her. But she had eyes only for Cousin Wallace and Cousin Wallace ardently returned her gaze. In a month they were engaged and Mr. and Mrs. Parker Maule were proudly "At Home" to their friends from eight o'clock to eleven to announce the interesting event.

Cecily went home to prepare her wedding clothes. Wallace settled down to learn in his father's office how to support a wife. The future gleamed bright as an iridescent bubble. Sad that bubbles are wrought of such perishable stuff! A day or two before the Maules were to go south for the wedding Wallace went on a spree which made his previous efforts along that line resemble a baby's birthday party. The main street proved far too restricted for his activities and the shops bordering the river bore the imprint of his visits as well. A stream of outraged proprietors went in and out of Mr. Maule's office all day and his hand grew tired writing checks to settle the damage done. Between checks he sallied forth to find his son, but by this time Wallace had impressed several boon companions into his service and they showed an uncanny ability to evade pursuit. He disappeared entirely

at last and his wedding day was several days in the past before he emerged from his self-imposed obscurity. His father had done his best to keep the matter from Cecily, sending her messages of illness and business complications. The ever-present kind friend, however, without which no engagement is complete, wrote her a detailed account of that illness and Wallace's ring came back before his head had stopped aching. A letter from Cecily's father came also, and the amicable relations between the Maules and the Carruthers ceased abruptly.

It is time to introduce to your attention The Other Girl. But she was such a negative quantity in the city's society, so unimportant in the eyes of the Maules and their friends, that it is hard to introduce her properly. And anyway she was never introduced. She simply slid in range of Wallace's vision with the unobtrusiveness of a morning breeze. She was five years younger than he; not particularly pretty, not particularly clever. She lived across the street from the Maules and from that distance she had adored her dashing neighbor ever since she put up her long braids and let down her skirts. Wallace was accustomed to toss her

a careless greeting when she crossed his path. It is doubtful if he ever knew her name up to the time of his last celebration. But Wallace began to learn several things when he came to himself. For one thing, he knew the quality of his father's anger—white-hot and implacable. He found out, too, that even one of the elect can not presume too far upon Society's good nature. Wallace was dropped from all social functions with a suddenness and decision which left him breathless. Another fact which was borne home to him in the course of the next few weeks was that young Maule, with a pocketful of money and a father to stand back of his debts, was one person; young Maule, dead broke, and with his credit no longer good anywhere, was another. The receding tide of his popularity left him stranded, hurt, bewildered and friendless upon the shore of his daily life.

One summer evening along about dusk—and the hour alone shows the change in Wallace's fortunes—he was climbing the steep hill which led to his home. His long strides casual glance showed him that it was his soon overtook the slender girl toiling ahead of him, her arms filled with books. His

little neighbor and with the courtesy which never failed him, he relieved her of the heavy volumes. The little neighbor's name was Billy Dunne. Not Wilhelmina, nor Willa, nor anything but plain Billy Dunne, a funny little name to match her funny little face. It was heart-shaped, this face, with the twinkliest brown eyes in the world. Eyes which made you smile before you stopped to think whether there was anything to smile about or not. The dark brows above them curved queerly at the corners as though they, too, were trying to smile; and the curly red mouth was simply an exposition of what a mouth can really do in the way of smiles. Wallace looked into the merry little face and smiled, too. That mutual smile seemed to sink right down into the sore depths of his heart and ease the ache. It was so good to find one person who had neither condemnation nor disapproval of him. When they reached her steps Wallace lingered, chatting. He was discovering every minute possibilities undreamed of in the quiet little neighbor.

Next evening he crossed the street boldly and asked for Miss Billy. Her mother's attitude was not encouraging, but she called Billy and Billy came and sat on the porch with him

and smiled her merry little smile again. That smile grew to be Wallace's life-buoy. It helped him through hard places as nothing else could do. The remembrance of yesterday's smile was lost only in anticipation of today's. Even with that aid Wallace found his days hard enough. He alternated between moods of defiant despair when he got most gloriously drunk, and of penitence which reduced him to humility and new resolves. Billy smiled at him right through it all. Sometimes the smile held a wistful quality which mourned for the latest fall from grace. When he had passed through a period of unusual abstinence and industry it was proud and glad. Wallace saw with an equanimity which surprised even himself, his erstwhile friends desert him. Girls nodded to him coldly, matrons failed altogether to see him when they passed him on the street. But Wallace, he who was so recently the petted and favored of fortune, cared now for nothing else but the steady radiance of a girl's smile.

Billy never preached. She never appealed to his better nature and besought him tearfully to reform for her sake. She just chatted, and soothed, and smiled—and left

the rest to God and Wallace. For a year it was a question whether the young man would go to the dogs utterly or become a self-respecting citizen. The chances for either seemed equally good. His father confined his attentions to the coldest civility and a desk in his office. His mother wept over him and asked the rector to call and remonstrate, which being an unusually sensible young man, he never did. At the end of twelve months people began to say that young Maule really seemed to be doing better. He hadn't been on a spree for a long time. Tentative overtures were extended to him and long withheld invitations began to arrive in his mail. Wallace was glad for his mother's sake, but personally he cared little. His friendship with Billy had ripened into something deeper and it was understood between them that when he had "stayed good," Billy's expression, for a year, they were to be married. Wallace was eager to tell his mother of his engagement, but some instinct warned the girl to conceal it. She realized how the proud Virginia matron would view an alliance between the obscure little girl and her only son. She had ignored his frequent calls across the street, choosing to regard them as

a young man's vagaries of which he would soon tire.

Eight months of the year had passed and Billy now agreed with Wallace that his parents must be told of their love. The effect upon them was all and more than she had feared. Mr. Maule's temper deserted him utterly. He had begun to regain his pride in his handsome son and for that reason the blow was all the more severe. As for Mrs. Maule, she simply refused to consider the question of receiving Billy Dunne as her daughter-in-law. She waved away Wallace's arguments and pleas for Billy as though they were annoying mosquitoes. The young man at the end of an hour's controversy found himself no nearer his object than he was in the beginning, so he wisely abandoned the subject and returned to Billy. Billy kept her own counsel. If her feelings were wounded by the attitude of her lover's family she said nothing of it to Wallace. She smiled at him comfortingly and tried to efface from his mind the memory of his father's ill temper.

Not long after this the town was horror struck by the murder of Ellison Kane. Ellison was a former friend of Wallace and the two had had many a bout together in the

days before the latter's regeneration. They had quarreled at last over a card game, Wallace accusing Ellison of cheating and Ellison retorting with a blow. Friends separated them at the time, but Wallace had violently proclaimed his intention of returning that blow with interest. The matter was almost forgotten when Ellison was found one morning in an alley with a bullet hole through his heart. Wallace Maule was the last person seen with him. Bystanders recalled that the two had met in front of the postoffice and strolled away in earnest conversation. Witnesses were not lacking to declare that this conversation was of an unfriendly nature. The old story of the card game and the blow was revived. Rumors flew from lip to lip and it was whispered that the prosecuting attorney would order Wallace's arrest.

When he appeared as usual at his father's office it was to find his desk gone and his personal effects in the street. Mr. Maule then and there cast him off in a fiery speech which drew a delighted crowd on the sidewalk outside the office. Wallace left without replying. In the street he encountered black looks on all sides and in some cases

actual threats. Before he reached home he was convinced that the entire community regarded him as Ellison Kane's murderer. Deep depression settled upon him. His mother was waiting for him with white face and set lips. She listened in silence to his account of his interview with his father. Her son realized with a pang at his heart that his mother believed him guilty of murdering his friend. He ran upstairs and packed a bag, returning immediately to where Mrs. Maule still sat motionless in the parlor.

"I'm going to the hotel, mother. I'll stay there until after the inquest. Later I'll go west."

She did not move or speak as he bent to kiss her goodby. As he came out of the door he found Billy waiting.

"Where are you going, Wallace?" she asked, her quick eyes falling on the satchel.

He told her in a few words.

"You'll have to give me up, Billy, darling. I'm a bad egg. Better forget there ever was such a person. If they arrest me for this murder it's all up with me, for I can't prove I didn't do it. And if they don't arrest me, I'm going to get out of here anyway. I've

had enough to last me the rest of my life."

"Yes, we'll go," Billy said placidly. "I'll be ready whenever you are."

A lump came into his throat. He looked down into the little face raised trustfully to his. Of course she did not realize what she was saying, could not know the extent of the sacrifice she was willing to make. Nevertheless he adored her for the readiness with which she linked her fortunes to his.

"We'll talk of that later," he said evasively. "I've got to find a room now and let it be known that I'm ready to answer any questions the authorities want to put to me."

She told him goodby with the same serene confidence in his judgment she had always showed, and Wallace went back to town, new courage in his heart. He had need of it in the long hours to come. Hardly had he registered at the hotel before a policeman tapped him on the shoulder and told him he was wanted at headquarters. For more than an hour he endured a grilling cross-examination, at the end of which he was exhausted in his efforts to be entirely accurate as to every detail of the past twenty-four hours. He was dismissed with a warning not to leave town until after the inquest.

This was held the next day. Wallace Maule was one of the principal witnesses. He told of the quarrel with Ellison Kane earlier in the year; spoke of their previous friendship; and in answer to the coroner's questions detailed the substance of their conversation the previous day. He said that the nature of the meeting was amicable and that they had parted friends. He knew nothing of the murder, nor did he know of anyone who might have a motive in causing Kane's death. The verdict of the coroner's jury was the usual vague one relating to person or persons unknown, and no formal warrant was issued at that time for Wallace's arrest. It was known that he was kept under strict surveillance and the evening paper was frank in its hints as to the guilt of the young scion of one of our best families. The same paper bore a startling item—one which the town read with avid interest:

"Mr. and Mrs. William Dunne announce the engagement of their daughter Billy to Mr. Wallace Maule, the marriage to occur in the near future."

Billy put it in herself. She walked with it defiantly into the office a few minutes after Wallace had left her and before night

everybody knew that Billy believed in Wallace's innocence and was going to marry him. She found herself in the limelight immediately, along with Wallace. Her mother was horrified at the notoriety she had attained. Reporter after reporter called at the Dunne's home only to have the door slammed in his face by the irate mother of Billy.

Before the tongues had ceased wagging over this sensation a new item set them going afresh. The murderer of Ellison Kane was apprehended and it was not Wallace Maule. A tramp arrested for stealing a ride out of a nearby town was found to have in his pockets a tidy roll of greenbacks and a seal ring which was identified as Kane's. After a judicious application of the "third degree" the tramp confessed to the murder. The fickle public hurried to congratulate Wallace and to assure him that all along it had believed in his innocence. But Wallace was not there to congratulate. He had taken the train for Idaho an hour after the murderer was known. He left a letter for Billy. He was afraid his resolution would weaken if he saw her again. This was the letter:

"Billy Dear:

"My name is clear again as far as the Kane

murder is concerned and I'm leaving town within a few minutes. I'm going, dear, first, because I owe it to you to give you your freedom and that I'll never have the courage to do as long as I can see you. Second, I want to make a new start in a new place and see if I can't make over this sorry thing I call my life into a worthy and desirable existence. I won't ask you to wait for me until that time. It may be years and you have a right to happiness now. I only say that I love you, I'll always love you, and if I come back to you with a clean record behind me and find you free, I'll do all in my power to atone for the misery I've caused you.

"Goodby, my Billy,
"WALLACE."

Strange selfishness of man which binds even while it proclaims freedom! If Billy shed any tears over this letter she did so in the solitude of her room. She went her busy, happy way telling all who asked her that Wallace had gone west to make a home for her. She told her mother so when that lady stormily demanded to know what had become of young Maule. She told Wallace's mother the same when that tearful lady,

heartsick and penitent over the injustice she had done her son, came across the street with friendly overtures to Billy. Wallace had left no address, so Billy could not write. She began to make her wedding clothes—simple, pretty frocks and dainty underwear, taking the fine stitches with the same serene content she would have shown had Wallace been at her side.

A year passed—two, three. The trousseau was all done and laid away in the big cedar chest. Now and then she removed a gown to alter its style, but for the most part she left the garments as they were. People ceased to ask if she had heard from Wallace. In these years Mrs. Maule grew fond of the little neighbor and shared her calm anticipation of Wallace's return. Mr. Maule died and left his estate to be divided equally between his wife and his son, but repeated advertisements brought no response.

Five years were gone since Wallace left—and soon five more. Billy's little heart-shaped face was a bit thinner than it had been and the girlish lines of her figure had straightened. The frocks in the chest were hopelessly out of date. The next generation of debutantes spoke amusedly of her funny

romance and whispered that probably Wallace Maule had a wife and several children out west by now. Even Mrs. Maule lost something of her confidence in her son's return, though she clung more and more closely to Billy. When Mr. Dunne died and Billy's mother followed a few months later, Mrs. Maule insisted that Billy take up her residence in the big house across the street and Billy assented tranquilly. It seemed natural to her that she should await her lover in his own home.

Wallace came back eleven years after he had left his native town. Few recognized the handsome, prosperous man who stepped from the train on a cold winter day. He sprang into a carriage and was driven directly to his old home. Billy met him at the door. There was no excitement, no particular emotion about the meeting. She put both her hands in his, smiled and said:

"Wallace, you've come!"

And he, stooping, kissed the little heart-shaped face turned so steadfastly in his direction all these years, and said:

"Yes, Billy dear, I've come. Will you marry me tomorrow?"

"Of course," his fiancee said sedately. "My clothes are all ready."

They were married the next day and Mrs. Maule gave the bride away. Hers were the only tears shed. It might have been a long planned event, carried out in the most natural manner imaginable, to judge by the bride's composure.

Wallace sold out his western holdings and remained at home. Billy took the next journey which separated them, but not before she had given him several little sons and daughters with twinkling eyes, a heart-shaped face and a curly smile.

During the Night.

On page 332 of the History of Buchanan County, published by the Union Historical Company, appears this item:

". . . . and the Mississippi rifles and ammunition which had been procured by Thornton's company in the raid on the Liberty arsenal, in April, 1861, and which were secreted in cellars between Third and Fourth Streets in St. Joseph, were removed by Capt. John F. Landis, in July, 1861, in wagons driven through the Federal camp next day by a trusty contraband (now a citizen of St. Joseph) and carried to the outskirts of the city, where Capt. Landis' company met and guarded them to Price's army, encamped upon the battlefield of Wilson's Creek."

In the Morning Herald of March 26, 1862, we find the following:

"Another Haul of Powder. Capt. John Pinger with a squad of men brought into this city yesterday twenty-one cases of pow-

der which he found secreted in Saint Maria's church, about eighteen miles below town and six miles southeast of Rock House Prairie. The Methodists have been holding a protracted meeting in that church for several days back, but with what success we have not learned. Capt. John Pinger can exclaim that it was good for him to be there. The powder was hidden in a loft of the church and Pinger's thoughts must have had an upward tendency to have led him to that haven of rebel security. As he ascended he was heard to exclaim, 'How vain are all things here below,' and as he landed safely his command united in singing, 'There is one before all others we would welcome here tonight.' That one was Capt. Boyd who secreted the powder. Capt. Pinger keeps an eye singly to the glory and rebels must learn to hide better if they would escape him."

In a later issue of the paper is a brief account of the finding of some Confederate arms stored in a vacant house near the cemetery. The article declares that three prominent young men of St. Joseph were implicated in the affair and it was expected that arrests would soon follow. However, there follows no mention of such arrests and the

stored ammunition seems to have been lost sight of in the days which followed.

This is the prologue to the play. The real action begins when the Prominent Business Man, portly, urbane, with a pillar-of-the-church sort of dignity, looked up from an interested examination of the foregoing clipping.

"Well," he demanded. "Why should you give these to me especially? Do you think I had a hand in these proceedings?"

Upon being assured that the finger of suspicion pointed irrevocably in his direction, he leaned back in his leather seated desk chair, folded his hands over what Artemus Ward irreverently refers to as a bay window, and spoke in words to this effect, the while his twinkling eyes belied the solemnity of his manner:

"Far be it from me to cast any reflections upon the integrity of some of this town's leading citizens, but if the whole truth were known there is a certain wholesale dealer and a prominent legal light, to say nothing of an eminent preacher now occupying an eastern pulpit who could tell you as much if not more of those stored arms than I can. Old people's memories are not always accur-

ate and it may be that my facts have become a little mixed in the course of a half a century, but here is the tale and you can believe it or not, just as you choose:

"When the war broke out there was a gang of us boys, ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen who were up to all the deviltry going. Charivaris, Hallowe'en mischief, misplaced fences—they were all laid at our door whether we deserved the blame or not and it is only fair to the police to say that we usually did deserve it. Well, of course, we had all heard the story of the removal of the Liberty ammunition and our young blood thrilled with the daring of it, exactly as the youngster of today thrills at the stunts of his favorite movie hero. And like that same modern kid we burned to do something spectacular ourselves. We—the gang, I mean—had a meeting place upon the bluffs where the high school now stands. And one summer night after dark we all sat breathless while Tom—I won't tell you his name, for he's the wholesaler I told you of a minute ago—told us of a startling discovery he had made. He'd been sitting on the back porch of his home whittling out a toy gun when he pricked up his ears at something he heard

his uncle say. His Uncle Darrow was Tom's idol—a handsome young Confederate, always in the vanguard of reckless doings. Darrow was telling Tom's father that not all of the arms and powder stored in those cellars had yet been removed and that it was planned to take the rest of it the next night but one and send it south.

"It was a dangerous piece of work—far more so than the first removal had been, as the city was now strongly held by Federal officers. Therefore the utmost caution and secrecy must be observed. Uncle Darrow thought some disguise was necessary and he and his comrades had obtained from their women folks a lot of feminine apparel in which they planned to clothe themselves on the night in question. Looking back on it now I can see that it was a bit of play acting to these older boys—the same instinct which led us into the scheme which later got us into trouble. Tom heard his uncle telling where these clothes were hidden—in the attic of Bill's home. Bill—or so I shall call him—is the preacher I mentioned. His father was serving with Price's army and his older sister was engaged to Darrow.

"Well—we listened awe-stricken to the

tale. It was as good as any Diamond Dick story ever written. But our excitement at the rehearsal was nothing to that which greeted Tom's proposal.

" 'Look here, boys, I'd like to know why we shouldn't have a hand in this, too. What d'you say we move those guns ourselves—tonight?'

"Our mouths dropped open—I know mine did—and we stared at him in consternation. We! Move the arms belonging to the Confederate army! Boys who had not yet felt the down on our upper lips? We shook our heads in admiring dissent, but old Tom proceeded to outline his plan to us. Bill was to get the clothes after dark. We all knew where the cellars were in which the ammunition lay concealed. It would be a simple matter to carry it out and place it in a hiding place of our own. It didn't take us long to decide where that place should be, either. There was an old darkey shanty near the cemetery which had served as fort, jail and army headquarters for us during the last year. The cellar was only partly excavated and the dirt which the spring rains had washed into it made it almost invisible to an ordinary observer. We would put our

arms there and when the time came that the southern cause stood in need of those guns we, the heroes of our generation, would step forward and proffer our hidden stores. In imagination each boy stood proudly, yet with manly ease before an admiring multitude while President Jeff Davis pinned a gold medal on his gray uniform. What was a little risk in comparison to a reward like that?

"By eleven o'clock the town was silent and dark. We stole fearfully to our rendezvous on the bluffs. Bill was already there with the clothes. Jiminy! I remember now the time I had getting into those clothes. A hoop skirt fell to my share and if you've ever tried to crawl into one of the bending, swaying, intractable things you'll appreciate my state of mind by the time I was ready to start. Bill—I can see him yet in Miss Mattie Peter's polka-dot Mother Hubbard or whatever the thing was, and his freckled face peering out from the huge scoop bonnet he wore. I attended Bill's church a few years ago. I looked at the severe austerity of his features, the correct ministerial black he wore, and I had all I could do to keep from bursting right out then and there at

the memory of his face and figure as he looked in the dim moonlight of that summer night.

"We got to the cellars some way, tripping over our long skirts, getting tangled in those darned hoops, but arriving at last very hot and tired and frightened. Then it developed that no one of us was exactly sure of the exact location of the arms. We knew they were there somewhere but just where? We divided our forces into couples and set out to hunt. We had provided ourselves with lanterns around which we had tied black cloth so that the light was scarcely discernible even to ourselves. Tom found the first batch, I remember—a lot of rifles stacked behind some whiskey barrels. We each took two and that was a load, let me tell you. It was harder than ever walking and carrying the guns, too, and it was a mighty done-up set who finally got to the old shanty by the cemetery. If anybody had hired us to work that hard we would have said and absolutely believed that we couldn't do it. Some of the boys were for quitting on the first load, but Tom gave 'em a speech that he couldn't equal today, I'll bet, and shamed 'em into going back.

"In the meantime it seems Darrow and his companions had changed their plans and decided to do their removing that same night. They went after their disguises and great consternation reigned when it was discovered the whole lot was gone. They scented danger and the wiser heads of the party counseled caution. But while Tom was haranguing his followers in the old cabin to further deeds of valor, Darrow was doing likewise to his hot bloods in the kitchen of Bill's home. Both orators were successful. We set out once more for the cellars, some of the pep gone from our movements but with the spirit of heroes still alive in our hearts. We sneaked into the cellar where we had found the rifles, lighted our lanterns and stepped cautiously—into the arms of masked men who held formidable pistols to our young heads. Golly! Will I ever forget that moment? I remember looking into mother's mirror the next day, perfectly confident that I would see white hair instead of the reddish shock which had been there before."

The Prominent Business Man took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"That's all. Eh? How did it come out? Well, for me at least it terminated in as sound

a thrashing as I ever remember getting. And I had indisputable evidence that Tom and Bill had received a dose from the same bottle. But—," he sunk his voice to a whisper and glanced with mock caution toward the open door—"we never told of those rifles we had hidden. Darrow and his friends took it for granted we had just arrived and they never knew we even found their hiding place. We might have betrayed it later if the discovery of the rifles hadn't been made. Then the threat of arrest sealed our lips. Bill and I talked it over not long ago and both agreed we'd give a very respectable sum to have one of those rifles for a souvenir of our great adventure. By the time we reached soldier age the war was over and this war found us too old for service. So removing ten or twelve flintlock rifles from a cellar to a deserted darkey cabin was the nearest I ever came to war."

A Little Scandal.

Is gossip still gossip after it has attained the dignity of more than half a century's standing? The sting should have gone out of it at all events. Let there be no suspicion of recrimination in these two bits of scandal which once set the tongues in a certain Missouri town wagging.

The first is the tale of the attorney and the mules. There was in this town at the beginning of the Civil war a young law student. He studied so little and possessed so faint a knowledge of the law that he was compelled to earn his living by doing odd jobs which came his way. The war broke out and he found himself unexpectedly possessed of two valuable assets—a neutrality of so flexible a quality that it enabled him to slide down first on one side of the political fence and then on the other with no injury whatever to his moral epidermis; also he possessed a brother-in-law in the Confeder-

ate army. Lest this latter fact seem lacking in significance it should be mentioned that the brother-in-law Had a Pull.

Came a day when our hero, whom we will call John Garretson, received a letter from brother-in-law saying that the southern cause was sadly in need of that brightest and best product of imperial Missouri—the husky, dusky mule. There followed suggestions as to meeting that need which seemed so altogether good and wise to young Garretson that he departed immediately for Fort Leavenworth where, it had been bruited abroad, the United States government had for sale several thousand mules which had lost their pristine freshness; in fact, which were long past their first youth. John Garretson bought the job lot for four hundred and eighty dollars. Mark those figures—you'll see them again—metamorphosed.

He returned with his purchases to his home town and there on the outskirts established the "Garretson Mule Farm. Fine Pedigreed Animals in First Class Condition." People drove out in buggy, chaise or carriage, or rode horseback to see these mules—and went away laughing uproariously at the dejected animals hanging their heads in the Garretson

pastures. Brother-in-law did not laugh, however, when in response to a letter from John Garretson he was sent by his government to inspect the mules. Instead he conferred earnestly with the master of the new stock farm; then he dispatched a telegram to a friend of his in St. Louis. The friend had quite a reputation as a horse dealer and he knew several dodges not yet included in the other two men's education. But they learned. By the time the St. Louis man and his corps of assistants had finished with those mules they were not exactly horses of a different color, but certainly mules of a different aspect. They looked as though they might travel for several miles a day without falling in their tracks.

Quite an interesting little tale might be woven of the different strings which were pulled (you know we said brother-in-law Had a Pull) before the sale of those animals was completed. Suffice it to say that John Garretson received just what he had paid for them—his patriotism would not permit him to take more—plus of course, a modest compensation for their board and keep during the few weeks he had held them in trust for the Confederate army. He paid four hun-

dred and eighty dollars for them. He received seventy-five hundred in good red gold. It will be readily perceived by these figures that mules are expensive boarders. The reader is warned not to open a pasture to them. Yet young Garretson was so recklessly patriotic that he went right on buying wornout mules from the Federals, boarding them a short time on his farm and selling them to the Confederates. And just to show how virtue is sometimes rewarded in this hard old world, when the war was over it was found that both Garretson and his brother-in-law were rich men. How they had become so it is difficult to perceive. The mule transactions had netted them nothing, of course—that was undertaken out of pure patriotism. It was opined by their fellow citizens that Garretson must have found a gold mine in those mule pastures; probably the mules pawed the ground deep enough to reveal the secret to the pure hearted and unselfish owner. Garretson built a handsome home later on. It still stands. He was a hospitable soul and he had a house warming. He went about rubbing his hands and chuckling genially:

"Pretty nice place, eh, my boy? Designed it all myself, too. Haw, haw!"

"You've got it wrong, Garretson, haven't you?" a friend inquired gently. "It's hee haw, isn't it? Render thanks where thanks are due."

This is a really, truly tale of a mother's bravery and wit. It is perhaps superfluous to tell it, for everybody knows how Mrs. Anonymous freed the Confederate prisoners from a city jail during the war. Mrs. Anonymous had a son, Jack Anonymous, who was serving in the Confederate army. She had also a husband who had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States government. He took the oath, not because he wanted to, for his sympathies were southern, but because he was compelled to if he wished to remain in peaceful possession of his property. He took it against his will but he kept it to the letter because he was a man of honor. One of the clauses of this oath was to the effect that no one should harbor a soldier of the rebel side, or having knowledge of the presence of such a soldier in the city, fail to report it to the authorities.

So when Jack Anonymous made his way

through the lines on a visit to his mother he was smuggled by his women kind to the attic where they (whom the conditions of oath troubled not at all) thought to keep him concealed from Jack's father as well as from the public. But they reckoned without Bet Pringle, a young lady who had proffered her maiden affections (at least so the gossip went) to young Jack, only to be spurned for another—sweet Sally Long. "Hell hath no fury," etc., and when Miss Pringle saw and recognized the form of her scorner crossing the yard at dusk one night, she straightway betook herself to the provost marshal and made such report.

Young Jack was arrested and cast into jail. He was tried as a spy and condemned to be shot. With some fifteen or sixteen other young Confederates he languished in the city jail, his only bright spot in the day being that hour when his mother, having first taken an oath that she was concealing nothing about her which would aid in the release of the prisoners, was admitted to her boy's cell to bring him food. Day after day Mrs. Anonymous carried jelly and cake and other dainties to the grim building. The time drew near for her son's execution. In

desperation Jack's sweetheart, Sally Long, and she put their heads together and evolved a plot.

Sally was pretty and talented and charming. The Federal captain in charge of the jail was a susceptible to this combination as the male of the species usually is. When Sally invited him to call, he went. When Sally took him to walk, he glowed with delight. And when one beautiful Sunday morning Sally give him permission to accompany her to church, he donned his smartest uniform, put a deputy in charge at the jail, and strode proudly along by the side of lovely Sally. These tactics of Sally Long had not passed unnoticed by her southern friends. That she, whose loyalty to the southern cause had more than once brought her perilously close to trouble, should permit the attentions of "a northerner, a captain, and the creature who was in charge of the jail! Actually the man who holds our brothers' very lives in his hands, my dear, is simply incredible. It is not to be believed of Sally."

And now here she was taking him to church with her exactly as though they were publicly engaged. Young men congregated on the porch of the church, tiptoed in to see

if it were true; tiptoed out again and passed the word to fresh comers, who in their turn stole in for a glance at the recreant Sally.

At home Mrs. Anonymous was preparing for her morning's visit to the jail. It was Sunday and she had a new gown. The wide, flaring skirts were supported by what was called a corset petticoat, the fashionable name for hoops. It was exaggerated, even for those days; but Mrs. Anonymous was a large and stately woman and she carried it off well.

"That gown sure do become you, Miss Anne," the colored maid declared. "Hits de widest, an' de handsomest dress you eber had."

"Yes," her mistress said placidly. "I expect to find this gown the most useful I ever had."

When she arrived at the jail she was confronted by the deputy.

."Captain's gone to church, ma'am," was the explanation.

"Then for once I'll not have to take that timesome oath," the lady declared. "I've taken it until I know it by heart. Here's my basket—look for yourself. There's a custard pie—Jack does so like custard pie—and beat'

biscuits and ham and jelly. Won't you take one of those little pound cakes? You'll find them really good. Is it all right? May I pass?"

Under her gracious, if somewhat awe inspiring smile the deputy assented. She passed in to distribute her delicacies among her son's friends.

That night there was a wholesale jail delivery and every Confederate prisoner won safely to his own lines. How did they escape? Who can tell? The jailers said they sawed their way out by means of files and saws furnished them in some unknown manner.

Mrs. Anonymous knew nothing about it, of course, though she smiled mysteriously as she ripped certain pockets from the inside of her new gown. And Sally Long did not know, though from that time on she was not "at home" to the poor Federal captain. This is a really, truly tale.

The Swamp Fox of the Confederacy.

During the Civil war period there was no more picturesque figure than that of General Jeff Thompson, known as the "swamp fox of the Confederacy." There is a wide diversity of sentiment concerning General Thompson, but there can be no two opinions as to his fame. Almost every issue of the local papers during those four years contains some mention of his exploits. The historical records of Missouri speak of him as one of the noted figures of his day. He was wined and dined by Davis, and at the close of the war was a guest of General Grant at his summer home. One of his contemporaries says of him, "He was the best loved and worst hated man in St. Joseph. You couldn't always approve of him, but you couldn't help admiring him."

In 1859 Colonel Thompson had more titles than the Sultan of Sulu. He was mayor of St. Joseph; president of the gas works in-

stalled the year before; president of the St. J and M. railroad; secretary of the St. J. and La. railroad; agent Platte County railroad; colonel of the Missouri militia; county surveyor; president of the Catholic Benevolent association; member of the Society of St. Joseph. He was in command of the militia at the outbreak of the war.

Colonel Thompson was so closely identified with the Confederate cause that it is difficult to think of him as being previous to that time a Whig, but so he was. From May, 1861, on which occurred the flag incident which was to be forever famous in the annals of his city, to the summer of 1865, when General Thompson delivered the vitrolic address to his troops which is yet fresh in the minds of his contemporaries, no month passed without fresh activity on the part of the Swamp Fox.

There have been many garbled and distorted versions of that flag razing affair. The writer, through the courtesy of the general's daughter, has had access to his own papers, diary and letters, and for the first time the story of that incident—an incident known from one end of Missouri to the other—is given to the public in his own words:

"There had been considerable excitement in St. Joseph at different times about flags that had been hoisted and the city authorities had ordered that no more flags should be hoisted; but our newly appointed postmaster who had been allowed to take his office only through my exertions, determined to hoist a flag from the postoffice, knowing that the city authorities would not order it down. There was considerable excitement about it when I returned to town and as I was then considered to be a head devil at all mischief, I was consulted by a Union man to know if I would interfere if it was put up. I told them no, to put it up; that it was none of my business and that our flags were flying and that theirs might also. I did not know of the order of the city fathers at this time, as it had been made while I was in camp. It was now rumored throughout the town that we might have trouble at any minute, as the Dutch thought that General Price had sold us and they were disposed to take possession. I purchased a small brass horn to blow signals and swung it around my shoulders. There was considerable excitement throughout the day and the flag was not hoisted. That night I did not sleep at

home, as it was not considered safe by my friends. The next day I learned that my house had been stoned during the night, either to insult me or to draw me out into danger.

"All the tiger that was in my nature was now roused and I roamed the town the balance of the day something like the western man who was spoiling for a fight or the Irishman who begged some one to tread on the tail of his coat. Nothing, however, crossed my path except a drunken Dutchman who was riding in a buggy up one street and down another with a United States flag waving in his hand.

"In the afternoon the hour approached to hoist the flag from the post office and the people of all parties began to collect. One of the employes of the postoffice asked me to go and drink with him. I went. As we returned another asked me to go with him. I went. As we returned another met me and invited me, but at this time I discovered that the flag was hoisted and that they had been endeavoring to keep me away and if possible to get me drunk. They had gone just exactly too far, for when I discovered their intentions I had enough whiskey in me

to make me reckless without intoxication, and without consulting a soul or intimating my intention which was that instant formed, drew my knife and pistol, ascended the rag ladder that they had used to the roof of the building and amid cheers, groans, shouts and threats I severed the halyards with my bowie and the flag flew off into the street and in an instant was torn into a thousand pieces.

"Then commenced a scene which might possibly be conceived but cannot be described. Hundreds rushed for the roofs over the other houses and every other way, all intent upon mischief, but my resolution having conquered the liquor that I had drunk I was perfectly cool and descended the ladder and walked away as if I was not an actor in the scene. Thousands saw this act, some of whom may describe it better than I. The pole on which the flag was, was torn down and brought to me. I ordered it thrown into the river and away it went. The Union men had now all fled to their homes and several hundred terribly excited men were clamoring for mischief, and insisted that all other United States flags that were that day put up must be taken down. I had to lead them to control them and marching toward the Turner

hall and the German Rifle company that had the armory there, I ordered them to take down their flag or I would come for it. The flag was taken down and so were all the others in the city. I now ordered the men to their homes to await the signal on my horn.

"Night had now fallen over the excited people and all was quiet. I had now gone too far to recede. I had cut down the flag that I had once loved. I had as yet drawn no blood from its defenders, but I was now determined to strike it down wherever I found it and to cast my lot with my southern brethren who were building a new nation."

It is rather a remarkable commentary upon this act that later four of his grandsons fought in defense of this flag.

Colonel Thompson rose rapidly in rank in the Confederate army. Brave to the point of recklessness, no mission was too desperate for him, and his commanders were not slow to recognize this fact. He was given command of Shelby's brigade on the occasion of the famous raid into Missouri. The order which turned this brigade over to Thompson, now a brigadier-general, is in his daughter's possession—a sheet torn from a notebook

with the appointment written in ink in Shelby's hand and signed with his name. General Thompson was relieved of this command in November, 1864, and reappointed December twenty-seventh. Extracts from various journals of military authorities of that time testify to the fact that Thompson's discipline over his troops was remarkable and his brigade noted for its military strictness. Later the leader was captured and sent to Johnson's island and it was during his stay at that historic prison that he catalogued the prisoners, located all graves in the prison cemetery, and notified the surviving relatives of their whereabouts.

In May, 1865, General Thompson, having been exchanged and being once more in charge of his brigade, accepted the terms of surrender granted to Lee and dismissed his troops. The speech he made on that occasion is perhaps the most famous of its kind during the war. It caused much bitterness among his southern adherents and at first glance it seems difficult to comprehend the reason for so biting a tirade. General Thompson himself explains it by the fact that during his incarceration his command was scattered and the original troops replaced by

the rougher element which skulks on the outskirts of every army. In his account of the occasion he says there were a few crippled and disabled soldiers who had fought in his command and for those he had nothing but commendation and friendly words. But for those marauders who had pillaged, burned and destroyed under the protection of the southern flag, his wrath knew no bounds. The speech which has been preserved in many a Civil war history is here reproduced:

"Gentlemen: I have come here to have a little family talk with you, as this will be the last time I will ever meet you together. I have come here to tell you the news. Many of you don't know yet that Vicksburg has fallen and many of you don't know yet that Lee and Johnson have surrendered. But I will tell you that it is all true. Many of the eight thousand men I now see round me, very many of you have been skulking for the last three years in the swamps within a few miles of your own homes,—skulking duty and during that time have not seen your own children. I see many faces about me that have not been seen by mortal men for the last three years. And what have you been doing all that time? Why, you have been

lying in the swamps until the moss has grown six inches long on your backs, and such men call themselves chivalrous soldiers. A few weeks ago General Reynolds sent a flag of truce to my headquarters and I sent out to gather up a respectable force to meet those officers and not one of you responded. A few days later when Colonel Davis and Captain Bennett of General Dodge's staff bore dispatches to me from that general, I again attempted to call about me enough of you to make a respectable show, and how many of these brave eight thousand men reported at the call? One sore-eyed man with green goggles! But you rally like brave and gallant men around Uncle Sam's commissary stores, and I now come to surrender you and hope you will make better citizens than you have soldiers." (Voice from the crowd, "General, talk to us like gentlemen!") "Now you just dry up till I get through and then you can get up on this barrel and talk. I know there are some gentlemen here and I know there are more damned, sneaking, cowardly dogs who have never 'done nothing on nary side,' and I'm going to talk to you all.

"In the first place I want to say this to you: The Federal officers who have come

to parole you and feed you have acted as gentlemen in good faith. They have not gone about peeping under your coats to see if you had pistols. They have not spied about your camps to see if you were secreting your arms, but they have treated you as gentlemen. But I tell you that you have not acted in good faith. Those of you who had arms, with a few exceptions, have left them home and those of you who have government horses have failed to report them here. Now, let me say to you one and all those of you who have retained all your arms, as soon as you get home take them to the nearest military post and deliver them up or burn them or get rid of them in some manner for, as sure as there is a God in heaven, if they are found in your houses just so sure will your houses be burned to the ground and I hope to God every one of you who keeps good arms or property of any kind in your houses will be hanged, and you will be, too.

"Now, I want you to go home and work hard and take care of your families. Work early and late and get up at night and see if your crops are growing. Above all things avoid political discussions. If any man says nigger to you swear that you never knew or

saw one in your lives. We have talked about the nigger for forty years and have been talked down. We have fought four years for the nigger and have been badly whipped, and now it is not 'your put.' The Yankees have won the nigger and will do what they please with him, and you have no say in the matter. If they want him they will take him and if they say that you must keep him you have to do it and no mistake. I tell you you have no say in the matter and you oughtn't to have any. Go home and stay there. Don't go anywhere but to mill. Don't go to church, for the minister will put knots and mischief in your heads and get you into trouble. Be good citizens and then those of you who have been good and brave soldiers have nothing to fear, but I warn those of you who have been nothing but sneaking, cowardly Jayhawkers, cut-throats and thieves that a just retribution awaits you. And I hope to God that the federal authorities will hang you whenever and wherever they find you, and they will do it sure. Now I want to talk to you Missourians. You are talking about going to your old homes to live again. What did every one of you say last fall when you went into Missouri and

expected to remain there? Why, that you would make every Union man climb a tree, and many threats of that character. Now, do you think that those Union men whom you threatened with the halter but a few days ago, if you got the power, are now going to permit you to come and live among them and have all the rights and privileges they enjoy? Not much! Now the tables are turned. If you go back there they may make you climb trees, and I hope they will, for many of you richly deserve it." (At this juncture a loud murmuring was audible in the crowd and a bystander suggested to the general that they might mob him.) "Mob, hell," replied the general, "I don't scare worth a damn.

"I want you all to go home and be peaceable, quiet citizens, and if marauders and outlaws come among you don't take the law into your own hands, but if you can do it arrest them and deliver them over with such evidence as you can obtain to the commandant of the nearest military post. By this means you will place the responsibility upon others and avoid neighborhood quarrels and strife.

Don't complain if you are not permitted

to have a voice in the election in civil affairs. You have forfeited all such rights and it now becomes you to submit to such laws and regulations as the Federal authorities may deem proper to enact. I believe and know that they will do the best they can for you, especially if you show henceforth that you now desire to merit their confidence by a strict obedience to the laws where you may reside.

"We are conquered; subjugated; we have no rights but must accept such privileges and favors as the government may see proper to bestow on us."

Surely no more novel address was ever given in parting by a commander to his troops! The wave of indignation which rolled over the state was quickly followed by one of laughter and "Jeff's Fond Farewell" became a by-word among Missourians.

At the close of the war General Thompson was appointed surveyor-general of Louisiana, a position which was created for him and which he held until a short time before his death. He died in St. Joseph at the Pacific House, September 5, 1876, and is buried in Mt. Mora by the side of his father.

Like his brother, Broaddus Thompson, at

one time a prominent attorney, General Thompson possessed marked literary abilities and had he turned his attention to the pen rather than to the sword he would have undoubtedly added to the literature of his state. He is said to have been of a peculiarly fascinating appearance, though he records delightedly in his diary that at the county fair he was awarded a jack-knife as a prize for being the ugliest man present.

His qualities, whether they were virtues or faults, were all positive ones, and he left the stamp of his personality on many quarters. "Jeff Thompson? Yes, I knew him. The darndest, hard-headest, outspokenest, lovablest old Long Shanks in the army! Those that loved him were always fighting for him and those that hated him were always fighting him. You couldn't ignore him or count him out; he always arrived from right around the corner when there was trouble brewing. He got all his friends in trouble but as he always took the biggest share himself, they never held it against him."

A touch of the charm of the Lost Prince seems to have hung about the figure of the past, for whether they remember him to his

credit or to the contrary, Missourians do remember him and recall without difficulty his various deeds.

In Missouri.

The late afternoon sun shone on the clearing where stood the Hedgepeth cabin. Grandsir Hedgepeth, now an old man, had felled the trees, cleared away the brush and grubbed out the hazel roots to make a space for his home deep in the woods that he loved. He sat now on the log which formed a step to the porch, watching the light slanting down the giant oak and maple branches. Now and then a squirrel, forsaking its tree, rippled across the ground for a few yards, only to run back to its safe leafy regions. Far off in the fields somewhere a cowbell tinkled. Within the cabin old Matty, the slave, prepared the flat corn cakes which she would presently bake on the coals in the big fireplace.

"Grandsir."

The word dropped so quietly, so melodiously into the outdoor noises that the old man hardly heard it. It was only when a

light touch fell upon his hand that he looked up. Then his handsome old face was illuminated with pleasure.

"Ye Carol? I did not see you come and I was looking at the path too."

"I came through the woodlot, and out by the pasture. See, the wild strawberries are ripe."

She laid on his knee a leafy basket filled with the tiny crimson berries. He touched them with a horny forefinger.

"No one but you, Carol, would have put them in these leaves and twined them all about with their own vine. It is a feast to the eye as well as to the palate. Minnie—"

"What would Minnie have done, Grandsir?" the girl asked. There was a hint of impish amusement in her tone.

"Minnie," the old man said carefully, "would not have picked them in the first place. She would have sent Matty to do it. Then she would have put them in a proper saucer and allowed me so many for supper, not forgetting to warn me that fruit at night is bad for the old."

The two laughed a little, comfortably, as at a familiar pleasantry. Carol seated herself on the log and flung aside her sunbonnet.

Her face, dark, piquant, vivid in its play of expression, was revealed. Dark curls tumbled moistly about her forehead. Her hands were slender and brown and she was barefoot.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour old Grandsir and Carol sat silent, wrapped in the absorption of their own thoughts. A queer understanding which made words unnecessary existed between the oddly matched pair. This understanding dated back to the day when Carol, then a baby of four years, escaped the custody of her foster mother and ran through the woods to the Hedgepeth house. She had fallen and bruised her knee and a brier had torn a long scratch on her arm. When Ma'am Waite, austere, forbidding and very angry found her runaway charge, Carol was curled in Grandsir's arms, her arm bound with a fair strip of linen of Mrs. Hedgepeth's weaving, her knee poulticed with bruised hazel leaves.

That was fourteen years ago and scarcely a day had passed since then that the girl had not paid Grandsir a visit. When his wife died and his great-niece from the east came to keep his house, Carol's frequent calls were received with ill favor by that cultured young

person. It was because of the unfriendly atmosphere within the cabin that Grandsir formed the habit of sitting outside in the shade of the soft maple until Carol had come and gone.

"Carol," the old man said presently, "Ye went to the frolic last evening?"

"Yes, Grandsir, I—went."

The laconic reply was so unlike the usual torrent of description which resulted from the infrequent merriments of the neighborhood, that her questioner looked at her quickly. Her dark head was down bent and the set of her small shoulders proclaimed that something was wrong. Grandsir's mind bestirred itself.

"Tom was there?"

"Yes, Tom was there."

"And Minnie? But of course she was. She left with Tom before I went to bed, both very brave in their new St. Louis clothes, Minnie bedecked with fringes and beads like a savage."

Carol sighed.

"She's a very lucky savage to have such to wear. And—and she's a very pretty savage too, I'm—afraid.

"Oho! Now we're getting at the truth.

stantly forgetting what a pioneer life you Missourians lead.' I—I could have choked her," Carol finished hotly.

The old man straightened on his log.

"We Missourians," he said quietly, "have faced such hardships and conquered such difficulties as the East never knew. Indians and outlaws and wild animals—the long cold winters that killed off the weak and delicate because of our frail protection, the hot summers when we fought nature to get a hold in the planting field. The country has been an inhospitable one to weaklings and those afraid to work but for those of us who fought the battle through she has been a royal mother. Missouri—"

She touched his knee gently.

"I too am a Missourian," she said proudly, "even if I am a branch-water's daughter."

"Who told you that?" he asked, frowning.

"Lots of people, Grandsir. I don't mind. I am only glad that my father settled here long enough for me to be born. Did you know him—my father?"

"As well as any one did, I reckon," he said slowly. "They came here in a wagon, your mother and father, and bought a few acres from the government in the west section. You

know the branchwater people got their name from the fact that they were too lazy and trifling to dig a well and drank the branch water instead. Well, your father's well was begun when you were born and your mother died. The shock of it seemed to daze your father. He left you with Ma'am Waite—I never understood why she wanted you but she did— and he set off in his wagon before you were a month old. I've always thought he'd have settled down into a good farmer if your mother had lived."

"What was she like—my mother?" the girl asked softly.

"She was a good deal like you are today—little, and dark and flashing. She loved the woods well nigh as much as you do and she died with her hands full of wild violets some child had brought in to her."

There was a long silence, broken only by the sound of the cow-bell coming nearer. Carol jumped up and pulled her sunbonnet over her curls.

"Tom'll be coming in from the fields and Minnie will be out here to watch for him. I must go. Grandsir—"

"Yes, Carol. Let me think about it over

night. I'll tell you tomorrow what is best to be done."

He watched her disappear upon the path which led through the wood and the light in his eyes softened. It brightened again to a steely hardness as he saw his grandson, Tom Hedgepeth, leading his horse to the barn. He was a tall, well built fellow, heir to his grandfather's handsome face and grace of manner. There the resemblance ceased; where Grandsir was resolute, staunch and decisive, Tom was weak, vacillating and impulsive.

"Good evening, sir," he said as he approached the cabin. "All alone? Where's Minnie?"

"Still primping in her room, I suppose. But I haven't been alone long. Carol has been with me."

His grandson's handsome eyebrows drew together.

"Grandsir, I must speak to you about Carol. She evidently considers our boy and girl sweethearting serious and—"

"Don't you?" The two words snapped like a whip.

"Why—why—" Tom stammered.

"You did until Minnie came here. After

that you began to consider Carol an obscure little country girl not worthy of the attentions of your important highness, is that it?"

"You're mighty hard on me, Grandsir," Tom complained. "I—if Carol wouldn't try to displease Minnie every chance she gets, things would be better. Now yesterday when we rode past her house there she was gritting corn—"

"What is there so shameful about gritting corn, Tom? It was the only way we had of getting our meal for many a long year."

"But that was when you first came here in '36, more than twenty years ago. People don't grit nowadays—that is, nobody but servants, or old fashioned folks like Ma'am Waite. And there was Carol right in sight of the high road with meal in her hair and her gown besprinkled with it. It was a trying moment for me, Grandsir."

"It must have been," his grandfather assured him dryly. "How you survived it is more than I can understand. Well, Tom, I think with you that this childish understanding had better be brought to an end. I will arrange for it tomorrow."

"You will?" Tom asked incredulously. "I thought—"

"You thought I'd think you ought to keep your word? Well, I've usually a prejudice to that effect, but in this case I want you to break it—for Carol's sake."

"For Carol's sake?" The boy's jaw sagged.

"Yes, you contemptible snob!" Grandsir rose to his feet and stood facing his grandson. "I'm ashamed of ye—ashamed to call ye mine. Carol—why, she's worth twenty of ye and your Minnie—"

"Thank you, uncle," said a smooth, cool voice behind him. Both men whirled to confront the faintly smiling girl on the porch. "Tom and I both understand how you feel about Carol and it's quite all right, isn't it, Tom dear? Will you come in to supper?"

When Carol came the next afternoon Grandsir was holding something in his hands —a deerskin pouch laced and tied with deerskin thongs.

"It's for you, Carol, child," he explained. "To take you back east to school."

"To school? Me, Grandsir?"

"I've always intended you should go—Ma'am and I started this fund when you were a wee child. You are to go to Boston to some relatives of mine—not Minnie's people—and there you will find men beside

whom Tom will appear like the imbecile he is."

"Tom?" faltered Carol. "Oh, Grandsir, I forgot Tom. I can't leave him."

"Tut, tut, of course you'll leave him. Let me hear no more about it. Run home now and talk gowns and bonnets with Ma'am Waite and in June you will start for Boston. There's a young ladies' select school which has a summer term—it's there you'll go. Study hard, my girl. Education's a valuable thing. I've used mine all these years here in Missouri and been glad I had as much as I did. When you come back—" he chuckled slyly, glancing around his cane at the pale girl. "Who knows whether you'll ever come back. Maybe you'll take a Boston husband and forget your wild Missouri home."

"Never!" Carol cried. "I love Missouri and everything in it and I'll come back prouder than ever that I was born here."

A fortnight later Carol took the stage for St. Louis and went from there by train to Boston. Her queer little letters describing the wonders of the big world she had ventured into for the first time came regularly all winter. She was well and happy and

very, very busy. There was so much she had to learn and so many new people to know. She was trying hard to be a credit to Grandsir and hoped he would be pleased with her progress when she came home. Give Tom her love and ask him to look after the wrens in the redhaw next spring—the cats were apt to reach the nest if it wasn't protected.

Before the next June came, Tom and Minnie were married. Grandsir did not tell Carol of this event, for it had been decided that Carol was to spend another year at school. The old man hoped that the girl's fancy for his graceless grandson had been a passing one, but he judged it best to leave her in ignorance of the marriage for another year.

At Christmas came the astounding news that Carol's father had been found and that he had spent the years of her childhood in California and was now a rich man. He hurried to his daughter and lavished upon her the wealth of his affection and of his gold. Carol returned the deerskin bag refilled to Grandsir and with it came a letter which warmed the old man's heart, so loving, so grateful, so comradely was it.

Things were going badly with the younger

Hedgepeths. Tom fell into the habit of riding his mare into the village each evening, there to gamble at the tavern with the travelers who made it a stopping place on their way to St. Louis. The country did a thriving fur business and money changed hands freely when the rum jug circulated. Minnie remonstrated, Grandsir threw the weight of his influence in the scale, but in vain. Tom had found an easier way to get gold than to work for it. Some nights he came home with his pockets bulging, others with a lean purse which told its own tale. Then came a steady run of ill luck terminating in a disgraceful affair which aroused the neighborhood. A young eastern fur trader had come to town that afternoon bringing with him a huge bag of gold, to be used in purchasing the pelts from market in the lower part of the state. He and Tom played and Tom had lost; Minnie's husband left the tavern in no pleasant humor and was heard to utter vague threats against the stranger. That night the bag of gold was stolen from the room of the fur trader and suspicion was directed against Tom.

Grandsir's head drooped piteously on his breast when the posse made up of the sheriff

and his deputies came riding out with a warrant for Tom's arrest. The house was searched but the gold was not found. Minnie was hysterical and kept calling upon Grandsir to save poor Tom. Tom himself maintained a sullen silence and would neither deny or confess when confronted by the judge. A week's close confinement in the county jail had an inspiring effect upon him, however, and when the trader offered to secure his release if the money was returned, Tom told where he had hidden the bag of gold. He had placed it deep in a hollow tree in the Hedgepeth woods—he took the sheriff and the trader directly to the spot. He plunged his hand deep in the dead leaves he had piled in on top of the bag but no bag was to be found. The keenest search revealed nothing. Tom's frantic story bore the stamp of truth and it was concluded that he had been seen by some passing tramp who had secured the money for himself. Back to jail went Tom to await his trial. Grandsir sickened under the blow. His had been a proud old name and Tom was the first to soil it. A Hedgepeth a jailbird and a convict! It broke the old man's heart to think of it. He tried desperately to secure enough

money to restore the sum, but it was quite beyond his resources. And then he thought of Carol. They were friends—he and she. He had come to her aid when she needed him—would she not be glad to do as much for him? No false pride prevented his asking—the old man had a royal creed of friendship. She had given him the privilege of helping her, he must not deny her the same right.

Grandsir trusted no letter in this affair. He gathered his few necessities into a carpet bag and made the long journey to Boston alone. For years after he told all who would listen of Carol's delight when she saw him. She was living in a beautiful home off the Common and her gowns and jewels made the old man's eyes open in wonder. But her heart was the same generous one which had made friends for her everywhere and she hardly waited to hear the story before she fled on swift feet to her father, there to plead her recreant lover's cause. Her father could deny her nothing, and though it was a large sum she had asked for, she obtained it without difficulty. A messenger was sent at once back to Tom with the gold and Carol and her father kept Grandsir with them for

a visit. How he enjoyed it all, the young-hearted old man! He walked and drove and gossiped with Carol's friends, shopped with the young lady in her own carriage in the morning, rode with her beaus in the afternoon. Only one fear marred the perfection of his days—the thought that Carol would marry an eastern man and settle away from Missouri. So it was with the greatest delight that he learned Carol's father would return to his daughter's well loved state there to build a home for future generations.

It stands now, that splendid old brick house, and three generations of Carol's sons and daughters have been born there. She married a Missourian who became one of the most famous judges of the state. Tom? He was sobered by his narrow escape from the penitentiary and led a blameless life ever after. His Minnie grew fat and colorless and whining. It is probable that her husband took sorry counsel with himself as he passed his childhood's sweetheart, slim and dainty and happy, riding daily with her distinguished and adoring husband.

Clarice.

You would never think to look at her now as she sits placidly knitting, glancing over the gold rims of her spectacles with eyes a trifle stern, that there is the heroine of one of the most dramatic love stories Missouri knew.

It had its beginning—this story—in the days before the Civil War laid its dividing hand upon cities, neighborhoods and even families. Clarice Dare and Jim Clasby lived side by side in the town which was most hotly torn by conflicting politics. They were childhood friends and when their youthful attachment ripened into love both families were pleased. A betrothal party was given and the wedding set for the early summer of 1861. And then Fort Sumter was fired on and before the echoes of the guns had died away the young men of the town were enlisting. The Dare household was loyally Union. Clarice had taken it for granted

that Jim was also. But there came a day when he hurried in search of his sweetheart wearing the gray uniform of the southern cause. Clarice gasped and retreated before his outstretched arms.

"Not that uniform, Jim," she pleaded. "Oh, I knew you would enlist—I've been expecting and dreading it for days—but I thought when it came it would be in the blue of our own dear country."

"The South is our country, too," Jim told her gravely. "I've chosen to wear the gray of her service. Listen, dear! Let me explain to you my reason for taking this step."

Long and earnestly they talked together and at last the girl came slowly toward him and raised her hands to his shoulders.

"I understand how you feel about it, Jim dear. I'm sorry it could not have been the other way, but I shall respect your feeling in the matter. Go and do your duty and when you return, victorious or conquered, you'll find me waiting for you."

So Jim Clasby kissed his promised wife and left the house, his head high in pride for the cause to which he had pledged himself. On the sidewalk in front of the house

he met Mr. Dare and immediately the older man came to a halt.

"What are you wearing that uniform for?" he demanded. "Enlisted on the rebel side, have you? Well, I have nothing to say to you except this: Never darken my door again; never attempt to speak to my daughter or I'll shoot you where you stand."

Mr. Dare was evidently a man of brevity for without giving the young fellow an opportunity to reply, he marched into the house. The slam of the door sounded hollowly in Jim's ears.

Just a word here about the Dare family. They were prominent members of the Methodist church at that time. Everybody remembers the split which the war caused in that church. Mr. Dare and his gentle wife were among the first to go, and it is said that he knew more about that affair of the silver communion service than he ever told. He was a righteous, godly man, but as his daughter said, "He did his duty so hard!" He forbade Clarice to communicate with the Clasby family in any way and thus cut off the only revenue of information open to her of Jim.

Jim Clasby's regiment fought under Col-

onel Green at Lexington, and took the Union entrenchments by means of bales of hemp which they rolled before them as they ascended the hill. For three long years Clarice heard nothing of her soldier lover. The Clasby and Dare families held no converse with each other and a similar estrangement existed between the Dares and their southern friends throughout the city. Many of these families had taken the oath of allegiance to the Union and were outwardly loyal, but it was well known that their sympathies were with the army of the south.

Just after Christmas in 1864, Clarice came down the stairs late one afternoon and entered the parlor on the right side of the hall. The house was built in the fashion so much effected in that time, with double rooms on either side of a long central hall. It was nearly dusk as she groped her way carefully among the confusion of hassocks, small tables and stuffed pillows which stylishly strewed the floor. Suddenly her hand came in contact with something stiff and unfamiliar. She bent above the sofa and saw a boy's white, weary face against the slippery horsehair. It was Jim! Her bounding heart as well as her eyes told her that. Jim,

so utterly exhausted with the hardships he had endured to win his way to her that he had flung himself upon the sofa unmindful of what but for her discovery would have been certain capture and death.

Clarice held her breath as the full import of Jim's presence there grew upon her. It was nearly time for her father's return from the office. What should she do? If it were only darker she might smuggle him safely within his mother's doors, but she dared not risk it so soon. While she hesitated, trembling with fear for his safety and with a wild happiness at his return, she heard the key which heralded her father's entrance, turn in the lock. Quick as a flash she drew the many-hued, knitted afghan over Jim's figure and tiptoed to the door with her finger to her lip.

"Be quiet, please, father," she warned him. "Margaret Clasby is here and is very ill."

"Clasby!" her father growled. "What is any member of the Clasby family doing under this roof? You know, Clarice—"

"Yes, father dear, I know what your commands were and I have not disobeyed them. I have not spoken to Margaret or her mother or father in these three years. I found this

poor soul here on the sofa when I came down stairs, apparently too ill to reach home. She is faint and lying still for a while. When she is better she will go home."

Clarice said afterwards it was the god of love himself who provided her with this plausible story. We will not pass judgment upon its inspiration nor go into the ethics of the case at all. Our concern is simply with the success which attended the girl's efforts. Old Mr. Dare paused uncertainly, half minded to enter the room and deliver his ultimatum to Margaret Clasby herself. But he belonged to the old school which knew only courtesy to a woman.

"Her illness alters the situation, of course," he told his daughter. "Go in and give her whatever attention she requires until she is able to return home. I do not wish to hold any conversation with one of that rebel family so I shall remain upstairs until she has recovered and gone."

Back in the dusky parlor Clarice worked quickly. She roused her sleeping lover—she smiles a little reminiscent smile now as she recalls how she did it—and made his danger plain to him. We can imagine the tender little scene which followed, the hasty

account of his perils on the journey home from the prison where he and his companions had been confined and from which they had escaped, the eager questions and yet more eager answers, the renewed vows and protestations of love—they were all crowded into a bare ten minutes while the room grew darker and darker and sounds from the dining room where the servants were moving about warned the lovers that the supper hour was approaching.

The girl's mind was the quicker of the two. It was she who thought of the daring plan by which Jim could safely return to his home. She slipped stealthily into the hall and returned with her large riding cape and skirt which were kept in readiness downstairs. The skirt was very long, so long that Jim's gray clad legs were hidden entirely. The cape was flung aroung his shoulders and his head muffled in a silken scarf. Then came the problem of getting him safely through the hall. At any minute Mr. and Mrs. Dare might descend, and there were fifty feet to be traversed between the parlor and the hall door. To be sure it was too dark to see Jim's face, but his height would betray him. Clarice dared not risk

an encounter. She ran hurriedly upstairs and told her parents that Margaret was ready to leave, but embarrassment at seeing her one time friends made her hesitate to leave the parlor. She knew how Mr. and Mrs. Dare felt toward her and her family. Would they please remain upstairs until she had gone?

"A very proper feeling in the young woman, very proper indeed," the old gentleman commented. "Certainly we shall avoid a meeting which would be equally as painful to us as to her."

Mrs. Dare sighed a little. She was recalling the countless times when little Madge Clasby had run in and out of the house as freely as in her own. She missed Madge's mother more than she could express—the good neighbor with whom she had exchanged recipes and crotchet patterns and many a dish of friendly gossip. But her husband's decree was law in the Dare household, so she made no protest.

Clarice went downstairs on fear quickened feet. The muffled figure inside the parlor stepped forward to meet her. With her arm about his big bulk, crouching to appear as small as possible, they crossed the

hall. Once outside the danger was over, as darkness had fallen. To carry out the fiction of Margaret's illness Clarice went with Jim as far as the hedge which separated the two yards. Then she hurried back to the house in time to sit demurely at the supper table with her father and mother.

Early the next morning before the household was astir she slipped out to the hedge where she found the cape and skirt Jim had secreted there for her.

Was he captured? Did they marry? Were the two families ever reconciled? Dare Clasby, whose voice has thrilled audiences all over the country, sang in St. Louis not many months ago. In a box sat all four of her grandparents and gentle Mrs. Clasby exchanged proud glances with Mr. Dale as Jim and Clarice's daughter came upon the stage.

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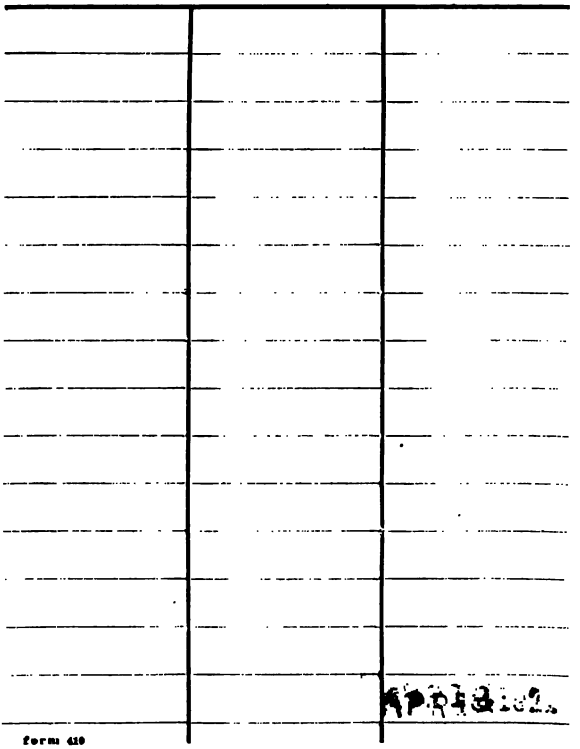

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